WILLIS PEYTON'S INHERITANCE

EMILY · L · SHERWOOD

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WILLIS PEYTON'S INHERITANCE.

The Story of a Claim.

BY

EMILY L. SHERWOOD.

Ragan, Mrs. W.H.R
of Anacostia, D.C.

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PREFACE.

THE author of this little book only aims to point a moral, by depicting *one* of the many striking phases of social life in Washington, and its influence upon character.

She trusts the reader will look with a degree of indulgence upon this her first book; and not be uninterested in the fortunes of a hero who is the victim of an Inheritance.

E. L. S.

NOVEMBER. 1889.

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CHAPTER I.

SUNSET.

ABOUT fifteen years ago, in an old country house of Virginia, one glorious evening in June, one sister said to another, "Why, Jessie, what are you going to do with all those roses?" for the young girl thus addressed had just come in from the old and neglected garden with apron and arms full of roses, — roses white, roses red, roses light, and roses dark, but all most delicious in odor, — she herself, a fair blonde, dressed in pale blue, the rarest and sweetest rose of them all.

"Georgia, I am going to decorate the house with them. What is the use of all this loveliness being 'wasted on the desert air' out there? They are my favorite flower, and I just revel in their sweetness.

They will never be missed from the garden. It seems to me I never saw so many fine varieties, so many blossoms at one time before. Come, help me arrange them in those old-fashioned Bohemian vases in the parlor. Put the deep crimson ones in the pale blue vases, and I will put these amber-tinted teas into the wine-colored ones."

"How sweet they are!" said Georgia.

A very fine-looking young fellow, nearly six feet tall, popped his handsome brown head up from among a pile of sofa pillows, where he was lazily lolling, and put in his masculine oar.

"Seems to me,

> 'By the pricking of my thumbs,
> Somebody courting this way comes.'

Expecting a call from that latest conquest of yours, Sis? I mean the one who is so artistically cross-eyed, so systematically knock-kneed. Girls do not usually decorate the house for their brothers' edification, do they?"

"Just as though I would look twice at that cross-eyed old fellow, even if he presumed to 'admire' me, which he never did. He comes to 'renew his acquaintance with papa.' You needn't laugh, and make fun of his legs because his eyes happen to be crooked. He walks as gracefully as you do; and, if he was a little more polished, and hadn't such a don't-care air about him, and dressed a little more stylishly, I believe he would be quite tolerable, for he is a gentleman and well educated."

"Oh, he would, would he?"

"You'd better look out, Will, or through pity Jess will come to loving that delectable fellow," said Georgia, who also had an eye for the ridiculous, in people as well as things.

"I did not know," resumed Willis, "that you had such a keen vision as to the possibilities in a fellow, Jess, as you display. If we only knew what you girls thought of us, what might we not become under judicious tutelage! There would be such a polishing up of rough material into

stones of grace and beauty as would edify admiring nations, especially the aboriginal ones, when they come to interview the Great White Father. We civilized mortals would spare no expense on powder for our hair, or ruffles for our immaculate linen. We'd do all this, and more, for one approving smile from our adorable 'She,' whoever she might be."

"Will," said Georgia, with mock severity, "the behavior of 'brothers' in the presence of their sisters is of such a nature as to give them a poor opinion of very young men; that is, if all brothers are like ours, forever making fun at their expense, turning all their beaux and their best thoughts into ridicule."

"Oh, bother! it does not affect your appetite, my sweet little spitfire. Now Jess takes all my remarks as a woman should, with becoming meekness. When she cannot follow my soarings, she waits for me to come down to earth again, near her comprehension."

"There! that will do. When you get to lauding your superiority, and your capability of 'soaring,' I just feel like pulling your attenuated ears."

"Well, that will do. You needn't pull my head quite off in your wrath."

"Oh," cried Jessie, "I've run a thorn into my thumb. Please to pull it out, Will; it hurts so."

"I've a mind to let it stay, to teach you respect for my superior opinions."

"Wait until you show us more evidence of your superiority. I will pull your other ear if you do not pull that thorn out."

"'No rose without its thorn.'"

"Do come, Will. You're perfectly lovely, — 'civilization's culminating flower,' if you will perform this piece of surgery for me."

"Yes, I will. Give me that digit that claims to be a 'thumb.' If you were my 'sweetheart,' as in the play, I would be willing to pull thorns out of, and caress that poor little thumbkin all day for the

mere pleasure of looking at such pretty dimpled hands."

"It's well you're not. No doubt you would be just such a spoon. But it is to be hoped that I should have better sense."

"Oh, yes, doubtless you would. The girl, however, in the play never runs away. You might, being such a cross 'old thing.' Is it out now?"

"Yes, thank you."

"Children, why are you always pretending to be quarrelling?" said a voice from the piazza through the open window.

"These girls of yours, papa, require a great deal of lecturing from me; but I am afraid they do not appreciate their advantages."

"Well, Willis, my son," said Judge Peyton, "come out on the gallery with me. I wish to have a little talk with you about my claim against the Government. You ought to understand all about it in case anything should happen to me. It seems

to me that I never saw Washington look finer than it does this June evening in the afterglow of the setting sun. The Capitol dome glistens like a globe of fire suspended in mid-air. I feel a thrill of patriotic pride whenever I see it, even if it does surmount the temple of a Government that, with its mailed hand, has laid waste my acres, dispersed my servants, and plunged me into the depths of poverty.

"Time, my son, rectifies all things. My loyalty is unquestionable, even if you did, with the impetuosity of youth, espouse the 'lost cause,' and throw your fortunes into the fate of your State. I do not blame you, son, though it grieved me sore: the only thing you ever did to cause me one throb of pain. But it is past. I do not regret that I was called upon to sacrifice for the perpetuation of the union of these States, as their interests are, and always will be, identical. Yet I have a good and justifiable claim against the Government. I did not murmur when it took everything

as a 'military necessity.' I had faith that it would fully compensate its loyal citizens for their sacrifices."

"You have filed your claim, have you, father?" queried the young man.

"Yes, it is in good hands, — Killgore and Lattimere are among the very best of agents. I have every confidence in their ability. My affidavits are all in, and everything proved up, so that should I die to-morrow, you would have no trouble about it. Should anything happen to me, my son, I trust you would carry out my wishes to the letter. Your sisters should be restored to the station and advantages to which they were born. Not that I think there is any immediate danger, but there is danger always to a man of my age and habits; and I like to feel that all my business affairs are in such shape that you could carry them on to a happy issue without me; although I can't see just why I am talking so, for I never felt better in my life, or enjoyed my dinner more."

"Well, father, I only hope you may live to see your old homestead re-established, if not in its original grandeur, in some degree of comfort. Our fields do look forlorn enough now, having been ploughed over by the Union army for the past few years as a camping-ground, all on account of its nearness to Munson's Hill, the highest point of land this side of the Blue Ridge, and commanding a full sweep of the Capitol. Of course there was nothing for the Union forces to do but literally confiscate and hold these heights, lest we Johnny Rebs get possession and shell the city. Such are the exigencies of war!"

"My son, we must let bygones be bygones. I do not wish to get so near in our talk to the dividing line of our political opinions. We can, now that the war is over, bear and forbear, and work together to rehabilitate our homestead. Your sisters will soon be young women; and I own, when I look at my scrubby fields of oak that have sprung up since my forests were

felled, I do feel concerned as to how I am to give them the opportunities for a higher education, and something akin to the privileges of their previous station."

"Don't worry, father, I shall soon graduate from good old Columbian Law School; and I feel it in my degenerate, 'rebel' bones, that I shall do you honor, raise the family fortunes, and lift us all out of this slough of despond, even if your claim should never be allowed."

"Well, well, I am glad that you can jest about it. It is youth's prerogative to work under the banner of Hope. Without her inspiration, nothing was ever accomplished. If you, son, inherit any of the genius of the Randolphs, your mother's ancestors, you will have 'wit' enough to lift not only us but yourself to some niche of honor. You look like her! You look like her! She was both brilliant and beautiful in her youth: a most charming woman. It is the joy of my life that I had her companionship for even a little

while. I think better of all women for her sake than I should had I not known her. I can conceive that any good thing is possible to the son of such a mother. But — she is gone; she cannot return to us. We can only hope to go to her. When? ah, when?"

His talk had dropped into soliloquy, and there was something in its tone — the old man's tender reverence for the wife of his youth — that touched Willis, especially as it was his mother, and not the mother of the sisters, of whom he was speaking, although she too "was gone." He rose to his feet to cover his emotion, and rapidly paced up and down the long gallery, two stories high, running its length across the double white house, where the wide central hall opened upon it, — a house on Munson's Heights in Virginia, opposite the city of Washington.

You need not look for it in your drives that way, since the old mansion fell into a hopeless decline during the war, having

been constantly occupied by some general or other as headquarters for himself and staff. Those who know from observation anything of military occupancy, know how devastating and destructive to property that is, as many a fine old mansion house can be seen to this day, being scarcely fit to live in, yet too good to destroy, or its owner too poor to replace it by even a less pretentious dwelling-place.

Old Mr. Peyton, or, as his neighbors styled him, Judge Peyton (he having been a magistrate and justice of the peace before the war), was a tall, finely formed gentleman, rather full in figure, and in some attitudes greatly resembling Benjamin Franklin. His hair was abundant, but white as snow, giving him a very distinguished appearance. He was, as so many Virginians are who have closely intermarried, very near-sighted. In manners he was suave and courteous, but coldly so, and somewhat imperious to his inferiors, although always polite, even in command. His

voice was noticeable for having a caressing cadence, especially when addressing women. It was so perfectly natural that it never gave offence.

The old man turned, with fond eyes, to look after his handsome boy as he paced back and forth, and then suddenly, without sigh or sound, his head fell against the tall back of the splint chair in which he sat, and he was still, *very* still. He had gone to the wife of his youth.

Willis, turning about on his return promenade, was struck by his father's noble, statuesque attitude, for no change had touched his countenance as yet. He seemed to be gazing out over the beautiful, glancing, dancing waters of the lordly Potomac. Or was he admiring the glow of sunset fires reflected from the crystals in the dome of the Capitol, or church spires and lofty buildings, where the dying day seemed still to fondly linger?

"It is beautiful, isn't it, father?" the young man questioned, for he knew the

old man's almost boyish admiration for the view of this, even then, the loveliest of American cities, with heaven's rich chrism upon it.

He waited a moment, but there came no reply. A sudden thrill of the possible shot through his heart. Willis went swiftly to him, and put his hand upon his forehead; and, as the truth struck home with a shock, he gave a sharp cry. His grand old father had gone home at sunset without warning. *He* knew his danger, without a physician to tell him; he had been told he "might die at any time;" but even he, the dear old man, did not think it would be so soon.

Willis's cry aroused the house. An old "Aunty" and "Uncle," too old to "run away," came hobbling round from the back buildings, and the two young sisters from within.

With such sharp, swift sorrows, strangers' eyes have no place. Bereavements like this come unbidden, unexpected, to many households, turning numerous lives straight

out of old and well-trodden paths, into new and untried ones, but such as were carved out by destiny or Providence, as you view it from a heathen or a Christian standpoint.

This sudden death was at the beginning of the threads to be woven into this story. It is the only event of the "old *régime*" we have to record, for these young people, born near the close of the old social dispensation of the South, were also born into an inheritance of changed institutions and manners from those their parents knew.

Circumstances are powerful things when sent by God's swift angels. There is no evading them, bring they joy or sorrow. These are not the lesser circumstances with which we have the shaping hand, but the great deeps of experience which run under outward things. There is only one way to meet them: to bow meekly to the chastening hand of the Father, in the hope that it is best they come, since it is His will.

CHAPTER II.

CHANGES.

THE September rains had set in, and the Peyton girls were indulging in the first fire of the season. It was in a southeast room, overlooking the Potomac River on the east, and to the northwest Fairfax Seminary and the church spires, and the shipping anchored at the dilapidated wharves of Alexandria. The room was called "the library" to distinguish it from its companion "the parlor," the two rooms being separated by wide folding doors that swung open like great white leaves.

Books there were, old-fashioned classics, — Plutarch's "Lives," Rollin's histories, Jane Porter's novels, and a galaxy of other books more dear to the older generation than to this, although as models in literary style they still hold their own proudly,

even in their antiquated expressions where flowers of rhetoric bloom beside words and descriptions of a coarseness that would not now be marketable or tolerated in polite society.

The late Judge Peyton had been educated at William and Mary College, and always retained his scholarly tastes; and, up to the last, he stood by the standards set up by *Littell's Living Age* or *The Edinburgh Review*. He looked upon that presumptuous literary magazine, *The Atlantic*, with suspicion amounting to aversion; therefore the library was, outside of Cooper's novels and Stevens's travels, quite antiquated. But, such as it was, it was the most homelike, cosiest room in the house, especially since the judge's demise, when a kind of gloom seemed to descend and brood over the place, chilling the two lonely girls, who had matured from girlhood to womanhood in the past few months, so deeply does sorrow write its lines of character even upon the young.

They had been so lonely. They had not missed their mother half so much, for she had been an invalid for years, while they were papa's pets and companions, his jealously cherished idols during and since the war. Oh, how they did miss him! Willis was one of the best of brothers, but he had to be out and away on business for hours or days, and they had no one to talk to, and nothing much to do. They had read the library through, histories and all, and they were live young things craving something that would take them farther away from their grief. Just now they were sitting over the open wood fire, indulging in air-castles as a diversion.

"Georgia, wouldn't you like to get away from this old place, and have an adventure of some sort?" said Jessie, who was of an imaginative temperament.

"Yes, I should. I do hope Willis will find some one to take this place off our hands, that we may go into the city for the winter; at least, while he is cramming for

his legal diploma. Otherwise, we shall have to spend most of our days alone, for he never could wade, I mean ride, through the Virginia mud daily; and when it is cold enough to freeze it, he would catch his death."

"You know we can't sell the place for two reasons: we are not of legal age, at least you are not, Georgia, and it is for our interest to keep it until papa's claim is paid."

"I wonder," said Georgia, "when it will be. Dear knows we need it enough. I think if I had a hundred dollars or so to go shopping with, as mamma used to have, my head would be completely turned. Say, Jess, don't you *envy* Will? He will soon have a profession, and can earn money to buy what he wants. I just wish girls could do that way."

"O Georgia, how you talk! A girl loses caste who does anything for a living, unless it is in literature or painting or something of that sort."

"I don't see why they should. It's very unfair when girls need money so much as we do. Why, if I knew enough, I would teach a school or do anything."

"There is no doubt you know enough, as far as it goes, Georgia, for even a school-ma'am's needs, but you never could do it, never!"

"Well, if Will wasn't such a 'rebel' one of us might get into a Government department, as so many Northern girls are doing. It looks as though they had an easy time, going to the office at 9 A.M., and out at 4 P.M., and drawing seventy-five dollars a month."

"Pshaw, Georgia, what ails you? You know Will would never hear of such a thing if one of us could get it, or of teaching either."

"Well, you may be sure if we get into the city I shall find something to do that even Will cannot object to, to earn money. By and by he will be wanting to settle for himself. You know he loves Kate Ker-

dolph now, and even if papa's claim was paid, it wouldn't keep us long."

"Who knows," said Jessie, "but that we may find a knight come riding by, as in the story books, to snatch us away from poverty, and put us alongside the happy folks who have everything merely for wishing?"

"If beauty can do it, Jess, you will meet your fate as sure as we go to the city."

"I wish I may, and hope he will not be forever coming," she returned gayly.

"There's Will, now," said Georgia; and both sisters rose to meet him in the hall.

"Come in here out of the rain, and warm by our first fire. Are you drowned? If so, you'd better change your clothes at once. We are so glad you've come, Will. This has been such a lonesome, dismal sort of day that we thought we'd have a fire, and have been sitting over it building air-castles, and 'bewailing our fate' in turn."

"Well, girls, what do you think I've done to-day? Give a guess."

"Proposed to Kate, and been rejected."

"Not much! If I had, I would not be likely to ask you to guess the sum of my misery, would I? It's something else, girls."

"What is it? Don't keep us in suspense."

"Let's have supper, first. I am as hungry as a bear. I can tell you while we eat."

"I will run and see if Aunt Chloe is ready," said Georgia, who possessed the housewifely turn. "She promised us hot waffles, and it is time that they were on."

Presently a bell tinkled with a silvery sound, and they each seized Will by an arm, and walked out with a marching step.

Jessie took her place behind the silver coffee-urn that was steeping over an alcohol brazier, and Georgia at the right hand, Will at the head.

Aunt Chloe came in, with a blue and yellow handkerchief tied on her head turban fashion, and in her fat hands a plate

of smoking waffles; an omelet as light as a puff, flanked by roasted sweet potatoes; a corn pone, brown and crusty; while honey in a glass bowl completed quite an appetizing array of dishes, which, served on old, gilt-banded chinaware, with cut-glass and silver of the style of a hundred years ago, was, as Will declared, "a supper fit for a king."

"I tell you, girls, I shall hate to leave this cosey old place."

"Leave it!" chimed in both sisters.

"Yes, for I have found a tenant, — a Northerner who wants to try Virginia a while before he buys; and, as he wants it at once, or as soon as he can get it, and I must be away from you so much on account of my lectures, I think we had better let him have it, and we can take a small house or rooms in Washington."

"How refreshingly you say 'we,' Will. Just as though you hadn't already settled the whole thing."

"Of course; I *had* to. You know with

a man it is now or never; and as he agreed to the price, I was glad enough to get it off my hands. I can't be a farmer and a lawyer too. And we must have something to depend on. There are still a few thousands in bank of papa's, and this place will lease for six hundred dollars a year; that is, stock and tools, or for half that if I sell the stock. The man will buy if I will make it an object for him to do so, and I think it best to take up with his offer; for the stock may die, or he may abuse them, and we would be equally out of pocket."

"Now that what we have been wanting is so near, the dear old home never seemed so lovely before, nor the rooms so full of tender associations;" and Jessie fell to crying.

"There, Puss, don't cry. If you can't bear to leave it, I will just tell him so, and make an end of it."

"No, you will not either! I am not opposed to the plan at all, only it comes so

suddenly, and our hearts are a little tender towards the old home."

"Yes, so they are. You girls will have to do the house-hunting in the city. You are the ones to live there, and must look out for what will suit you and our means, rather than myself."

"O Will, you are such a good brother!"

"Taffy, taffy, Jess! I don't need any. I just love you two as the apple of my eye, — almost as much as I do Kate, and I am not half so much afraid of you as I am of her, either."

"That is a good joke. You afraid of anybody! I dare say if you haven't already popped the question to that 'sweet maid,' you will do it. As a matter of course you have a right to a 'yes,' and she will never dare say anything else."

"Much you know about it. Courting is all very nice; but popping the question, — many a man has turned gray in a night at the thought of it, or remained a bachelor to the end of his days because he

couldn't muster up courage to face the music. I believe in having a 'John Alden' to do it for you, if that celebrity had not so bungled as to speak for himself more powerfully than for his friend.

"Mammy, these waffles are too good,— good for nothing but to be eaten. Bring another plateful," said Will.

Aunt Chloe was either "Mammy" or "Aunty" to these children.

After supper the three went back to the library fire, and Jessie opened the old piano for the first time since papa's going away. Together they sang in mezzo, contralto, and tenor, "'Tis years since last we met," "Do they miss me at home?" and "Maryland, my Maryland," until the fire burned itself out, and they were tired.

Next morning the girls climbed into the rickety family carriage, with Will and Uncle Pete on the front seat, to drive into the city.

Uncle Pete had done his best to make it presentable. He had washed it off, but the original lustre of its ancient panels was

quite gone, and one window was out, while the curtains had a "floppy" habit when down, so that Will had them all rolled up tight, which made it more cheerful, as on this morning it was clear, and everything had a fresh, cleaned-up appearance, even the pale blue sky above them, after the rain.

The road was "a sea of mud," and to keep from being spattered, the girls kept their alpaca dusters over their wraps, with thick green barege veils over their bonnets. What cared they? There was to be a change from the old ways of living to something new, and they were all young enough to enjoy the prospect. How soon, with chat and badinage, they found themselves travelling over the Long Bridge, celebrated in song and story as the bridge over which the Union army went marching into the South, with broken step, lest the equal, soldierly tread should cause its vibratory motion to bring it to a wreck.

"I wonder," said Jessie, "if that Washington monument ever will be finished?"

"It will be a good while first, I think," responded Will. "Nobody ever yet was able to fathom the 'plan' adopted, or to find out what becomes of all the money put into the boxes in the public buildings, marked 'Monument Fund.' If you are curious about it, there is a low wooden building at its foot in the White Lot containing a lot of strange stones to decorate the monument when it is finished, — stones from societies, nationalities, and the isles of the sea.

"Here we are on the avenue. You girls report at Harvey's restaurant at one o'clock, for lunch. Good-by, and success to you. Uncle Pete, you take the carriage and horses to Nailor's stables as usual, only be sure to be here for us at four, sharp. Days are getting short, and we want to get through the worst of the mud before dark."

Such a series of adventures as those girls had in house-hunting would form a chapter by themselves!

CHAPTER III.

HOUSE-HUNTING IN THE CITY.

WHEN the young people reached home that evening, and had been refreshed by a warm supper, — one of Aunt Chloe's best, — they gathered around the "ingleside," and talked over the events of the day.

Will sat in the "sleepy hollow," deftly manufactured out of a barrel, while Georgia assumed her favorite attitude by the chimney, seated on an old "ottoman," and Jessie in her accustomed rocker.

"Now this is what I call comfort," said Will, "for it is just frosty enough to-night to make a fire pleasant and cheerful. Girls, we have had some pretty good times in this old house, before the war, when papa was rich, and we were careless children. Little we knew or cared about life then."

"Speak for yourself, Will," replied Jessie. "If I was merely a baby, I used to imagine wonderful things as happening to all of us. How we should go abroad and travel, having no end of fun, seeing all the wonders of the world, we girls growing up and marrying in fine style; but, alas, all my dreams have just come to nothing at all, and here we are planning to leave this dear old place, not because we want to, but because we must. Oh, I want to tell you of some of our experiences to-day. Of course you are dying of curiosity, but, being a man, you would not confess it."

"Yes, I should like to know the upshot of your quest, but as for 'curiosity,' that's a purely feminine trait. We men 'just want to know, you know.' Oh, no, it's not curiosity. Go on."

"Let me tell mine first, Jess," said Georgia; "for if I am the youngest, I always have to lead off.

"After leaving you, Will, we consulted

the *Star* to see where we must go to find rooms suitable for housekeeping in a small way. Now to read those 'ads.,' one would think Washington so full of first-class accommodations that it would be very easy to suit ourselves, as all had a 'southern exposure' with the 'modern improvements' attached.

"Well, we travelled north, and we travelled south; we travelled east, and we travelled west,—until we had spent all our car-fare, and were footsore from walking after it was gone, and tired climbing stairs. Some 'elegant' places turned out to be barren, stuffy, gloomy, execrable, and the landladies were many of them as quaint as Dickens's characters. One little old maid was taking her solitary lunch when we ran up the front flight of steps, and rung the bell. She poked her queer little head, that set so stiffly upon a long, crane-like neck, out of the basement-door, saying to us, 'Come down here for the rooms.' The 'lunch' was spread out on a fruit napkin

at a side table. A little brown earthen teapot, that looked as antiquated as herself, with a dish of bread and a baked apple, was all. She looked, and it looked, so lonesome, I don't think I should like to be an old maid, and have to look as she did, or eat in solitary state.

"'Yes,' she said, 'I have a suite of rooms suitable for housekeeping, but I couldn't let them for three young folks to keep house in, especially brothers and sisters. People have to be careful who they take in. I have to. I will not rent my rooms to single women, to people with children, to any one who keeps a cat or dog or a singin' bird. I can't bear the noise of the last, and children! — they just ruin all one's furniture. Indeed, the other day I suppose I mortally offended a lady who came with her husband to look at my rooms. She was real nice lookin', but kind o' tired like; and, after lookin' at the rooms, and sayin' they was pleased, I happened to think perhaps they might

have children. So I says, "Everything is satisfactory, providin' you've no children." "We have four," she snapped out, and bust out a-cryin'. "We have been everywhere, my husband and I, to get board or rooms, but nobody wants children, no matter what we pay. I say, Charles, let's go home, and *kill our darlings* to satisfy people who give board or rent rooms," and then she laughed as hard as she'd cried. I felt real bad for 'em, but I *couldn't* have children round, tearing up and down stairs, and scratching up the furniture. I was real sorry, for she was a sweet little thing. Now it's just as bad with you. I know I should like you, but I couldn't have young folks around, comin' and goin' all times day an' night. Now what I likes is to rent my rooms to settled, elderly people who hasn't any one but theirselves, or young men "roomers" from the departments, who are only in their rooms evenins'.'

"I just winked at Jess, and said, 'Well,

I do not think, madam, your terms would suit us any more than we should suit you."

"The next place we tried," said Jessie, "turned out to be a fashionable boarding-house. The rooms were in suites, but too high priced for us. It really was a nice place. We were sorry, for everything was so fresh and inviting. We had to wait for madam, as she was showing rooms to some parties when we went in. Georgia and I had ample time to take in all the pretty things in the parlor before she came in with them. Presently they came in together. She, the brisk, business-like proprietor, with a thin little old man and a beautiful young woman, — young enough to be his daughter, as we supposed she was, until the lady of the house said, 'Senator B., shall I have the rooms made ready for you? Your wife seems to be much pleased. I have Senator V. and Congressman L. and Hon. Mr. N. I am sure you could not fail to be pleased with the social side of the house, and I think

from my experience I could satisfy you in other respects.'

"Mrs. Senator spoke up, 'I haven't seen rooms anywhere, or a location that suited me so well.'

"'They don't suit me, madam, and I think we will waste no more time, but settle down for the winter in C Street,' said he somewhat churlishly.

"We couldn't help pitying that young wife of whom we had heard so much when she was married to him, she having been in the treasury, and everybody thought it such a grand thing for her. Her eyes were full of tears that she seemed too proud to either shed or wipe away. We exchanged glances, for we both thought how different, how much nicer some men's ways are than those of others; for you, Will, told us this morning to find a place to suit ourselves, as we, not you, had to stay there most of the time. Now we had run across 'C' Street in our travels, and it was a fashionable quarter, years and years ago,

we were told, when Webster and Clay and men of that far-away time lived there; but now the old-fashioned houses are not generally occupied by senators who have wives to go into society, or who might want to live where they could see a little of life; 'F' Street, they said, or some of the streets near by, were fashionable streets, and the prices correspondingly high, as we found out by inquiring at one or two places. Our little bank account would be swallowed up with one winter's living in that section."

"Come, don't be all night telling your adventures and impressions," said Will. "Did you find anything to suit us?"

"Yes, we did," they cried in chorus. "The loveliest little house, with a sunny back porch and a long window in front, and a stable at the rear, with a warm, plastered room over it, just big enough for Aunt Chloe, only it's ever so far out Fourteenth Street, almost to Columbian College; but we thought as it was cheap, and would be so handy for your lectures, we took the

refusal of it that you might go and see it. It would be ever so much nicer to keep house in a little place to ourselves. The whole six rooms will cost no more rent than two would in the heart of the city."

"Well, it seems to me, for amateurs, you are getting along pretty fast; only I do not attend lectures in the college, for the law department is in the city. However, if the house suits you two, we will take it, for we can't leave Aunt Chloe behind, nor could you keep house without her. I can find something for Uncle Pete to do, if he is not wanted here. But come! do you know what time it is? Just twenty-five minutes to twelve. Give us a kiss, and skip."

CHAPTER IV.

NEW SCENES.

IT was quite late in the fall before the young Peytons were settled in their new home in Washington. But at last the change was made, and Will had resumed his law studies in earnest, while the girls adjusted themselves to their new surroundings, and began to look about them.

Being in mourning, they could not have gone into society even if their circumstances had warranted it, which they did not.

The girls, the year before, had spent several days at the Centennial in Philadelphia, and they were, like many others, stimulated by what they saw. Indeed, an era in American culture dates from that exhibition, when the possible in art became

known to them for the first time. Sculpture, painting, decorative art, with ceramics and the power and beauty of color, flashed like a revelation from the east to the west, from north to south. To women, especially, it was as if they were passing through a course of training. Their quickness of perception and adaptability wrought wonders in a short time. The *bric-à-brac* age set in. Satin and antique patterns in lace, wood-carving, hand-painting of every blossom of the tree and flower of the field, began to appear in a thousand beautiful things intended to adorn and refine home life; while schools of art and artistic associations sprang up on every hand, adapting themselves to the needs of young women who gladly went in and occupied these new avenues of pleasant toil of a remunerative character. The fashion of ugly things passed away, and the revival of a taste for old things, still beautiful in the quaint curvings and delicate forms of the Colonial period, was instituted. Garrets and closets

disgorged their burdens of disused heir-looms, and under skilful repairs became articles of use and beauty once more. Many a decayed family took advantage of this *renaissance* to dispose of antique chests of mahogany or rosewood, square tables, with one broad leaf and slender legs, corner cupboards, claw-footed stands, and old bronzes, to replenish their purses and furnish the necessaries of life. Even men did not scorn to go into the business of selling old-style furniture, made as good as new, at fancy prices.

Now Jessie and Georgia were bright young girls, just at the age to take up new ideas; just near enough genteel poverty to see the utility of entering into some one of these avenues of money-making. At least, Georgia did, she being of the more practical turn, while Jessie's sense of the beautiful and her poetical temperament responded in another way to the charm of all she saw on her Centennial rounds.

Will would have been much surprised

had he known just what change was taking place in the minds of his sisters, and not a little shocked; for he was born and reared under a social system which regarded women as too fine and lovable for every-day, practical uses, outside of home life. The fact was, he was deeply engrossed with his law studies, getting ready for graduation in the spring; and his ardent desire was to be through with it and settled to business, as the closing up of his father's estate began to haunt his mind day and night. Lastly, he was in love; he longed for life to begin to yield its opportunities, that he might dispose of his sisters comfortably, and please himself by proposing to his divine Kate.

Such was the state of affairs with the Peytons at the beginning of the winter of 1877.

"Jess, I wonder what Will would say if he knew how deep I was in this art craze."

"Oh, he would think it nice, your painting on satin, plaques, and cards; but if he

knew you put them up for sale at an art dealer's, that would be another thing in his estimation."

"All the same, I am going to do it if I can. I love it, and it does not in the least encroach upon my home life. I have hours that, otherwise, would be spent in idleness. Indeed, if I succeed, I mean to add all sorts of fancy work and knitting to my accomplishments. I can crochet now, so I will not have to learn that; and I have an idea of setting up an art school myself, when I 'graduate from my course of study.'"

"Georgia, where do you think I went to-day? You'd never guess, so of course I shall have to tell you. I just stumbled upon the loveliest place, something I've heard about but never happened to know where to find before, — Mrs. P.'s kindergarten. I do wish you had been there! The dear little children were so happy making clay balls, block houses, and dancing to the music of the piano. There were four little tables, low and square, around which sat eight or

ten children from three to five years old, with a teacher at each directing the play, and teaching them so easily they never thought of being tired. It is just what I should like to do. They seemed so happy; each little thing skipping about, when it had occasion to get up or move, so naturally and gracefully, without reproof. I talked afterward with the principal. It would take two years of study and practice to become a kindergartner; but if it does cost two hundred dollars to learn, I would rather do without clothes — almost, than not learn it. Now it is a good, womanly, self-supporting profession, which even Will could not object to."

"However can we manage it, Jess? The money part, I mean. Perhaps I shall be able to earn a little to help you; that is, if my scheme works. Beside, I can do all my work at home, and in doing so attend to home affairs, with Aunt Chloe's help, so that Will can have nothing to say on that score."

"Georgia, let us keep our secret until we have gotten so far along he cannot interfere if he would."

"All right, only he is such a good brother I would not deceive him in anything else, not even a love affair."

"Nor I. No lovers for me that he does not approve. However, for the present our lovers are not likely to trouble us."

"I should think not. I'm in no danger, but you, the beauty of the family, had better go to your kindergarten deeply veiled, lest some wandering troubadour or *attaché* 'gobble' you up."

"Georgia, you are talking slang and nonsense in the same breath."

"O Jess, I've an idea!"

"Have you, my dear? Does it tire your brain? If so, share it with me."

"It is about the money for your kindergarten expenses. Do you remember the old rosewood high chest of drawers upstairs? And that claw-footed table in the spare room with a square top, that is

always in the way, being too big for the centre of so small a room, and does not look well anywhere else? and the brass set of fire-dogs? I dare say that Zimmerman would jump at them, and give us quite a lot of greenbacks."

"I suppose so; but what would Will say?"

"You know he wanted us to leave them in our house at Munson's Hill, because he thought them not fit to move, or adapted to modern uses."

"Well, I suppose he would be reconciled to their loss if, some day, he awoke to find them missing, and our purses fattened by the change."

"Jess, don't let us make a bug-bear of Will, by asking what *he* will think every time we turn around or sneeze. Those things are as good as sold, for I am going to see Zimmerman this very afternoon, and ask him to call round and look at them. I mean to set a value on them so high he will think them prizes. They are ever so

old. Papa used to say that George Washington once shaved in front of the chest of drawers, which had a tiny, square, swinging mirror with a little comb-drawer under it; but, being detached, it got broken."

"Georgia, I'd like to keep them myself; but since we must raise the money, I am willing to sacrifice even the shrine upon which the Father of his Country once leaned and shaved."

Their sale did not enrich the girls, but it enabled Jessie to pay something down, and begin her kindergarten training, into which she entered with all the enthusiasm of one who loves her calling, and means to succeed in it. Nothing was too hard in it for her to do, even if it cost hours of midnight toil.

In the mean time, Georgia's profession being something more ephemeral, and she such a practical body, with no false pride, before winter was over had established a reputation for doing good amateur work. A dealer in such things sold her panels and

plaques for a "commission" which left a sum sufficient to keep the girls supplied with a little ready cash for the emergencies that are always coming up, and demanding pin-money of a girl. Everything at home moved along so smoothly that Will never suspected that his ladylike sisters were doing anything more than spending their idle hours in the usual way of girls who had fathers or brothers to provide for them; although he was conscious that the word "provide," as yet, was pretty much left to the realms of imagination. "But then they were such sensible girls, they were not forever making demands on a fellow's purse." They considered that they must get along with as little as possible until he was able to earn money, their bank account being so small, and growing beautifully less every day.

Spring in Washington is charming from the time of the first violet and trailing arbutus until the summer solstice in the midst of June. It is, also, the season when all the colleges in the district, in festal array,

graduate scores of young men. There is that Jesuit College of Georgetown, with its high standard of scholarship; Columbian, of a later period; and that other, which came up like a flower at the close of the war. It is a *rara avis*, — to mix metaphors, — that bears light and dark fruit on the same stem, being a colored institution that graduates more white than colored students, many of whom belong to the gentler sex — Howard University.

The students of each vie with the other in trying to outrival one another during the Commencement season. Committees of receptions prepare most gorgeous and expensive programmes, and send to all the friends of the students; while they in turn spare no expense in bestowing floral gifts and bouquets upon their pet graduates. Even the President of the United States takes part in these ceremonies, and bestows the diplomas, tied up with blue ribbons, upon the lawyers and doctors just embellished with the "B.A.'s" and "M.D.'s,"

who go forth to conquer or be conquered, as they have the ability, or want of it, to sustain themselves.

Lincoln Hall, which then stood at Ninth and D Streets, was the favorite graduating rostrum for all the colleges during those years. Howard generally leads off in March; Columbian, in April or May; while Georgetown prefers the leafy month of June, when roses blow their sweetest breaths across the soft moonlight nights.

It was a lovely night in May that Willis Peyton was graduated. He had been the unanimous choice of his class as valedictorian. He was handsome, fair, and graceful, with just enough red in his hair to give him the touch of sanguineness which captivates, and augurs success to him who possesses the happy temperament. Notice it: men with a touch of an auburn glint in beard or hair are generally successful, when another type of man fails, for want of this sign of hopefulness, — a something that goes with it, and gilds the edge of

even the adverse with a gleam of brightness, depriving Fate of half its power to hurt.

Somebody had bestowed a harp of golden roses set in smilax, and he was quite sure Kate of the hazel eyes had a hand in weaving it. It took him and the girls to carry home the bouquets showered upon him; and many a joke had they as he would drop one now and then, for he had his diploma to carry, which he insisted he would take care of himself, it being a sign that he had really passed; without it he never could believe the pleasing fact, although a picture of the house crammed from wall to wall with bright, upturned faces, as he delivered the valedictory, and the music by the Marine Band still singing and tingling in his ears, made it a happy scene to remember as long as life lasted.

It was long past midnight before the three happy girls retired, for Kate, Will's sweetheart, accompanied them home that night by pre-arrangement; and it was very

late the next morning before Aunt Chloe thought best to summon those "chilluns" to breakfast.

They were hardly seated when a gentleman called to see Will on a business matter. He was greatly surprised on going into the little parlor to see one of the noted practitioners of the Capital Bar, an elderly gentleman, who had grown gray in the service, and had been offered a judgeship on several different occasions, but refused because he preferred the greater emoluments of a private practice to the cares of office, even on the Bench.

"Good-morning, my young friend. I have called to congratulate you on your own account, and, also, because I knew and very highly esteemed your father. I have another object in view. I am getting old, my practice is large, and I need some young blood. In a word, I have come to the place where I prefer office practice to going before the bar; and as I have a large business requiring both kinds of work, I pro-

pose taking in a young man fresh from the schools. I am going to offer it to you on these terms. Twelve hundred dollars the first year, eighteen the second, and twenty-five the third, or a junior partnership, whichever is preferable, in case — always — that we suit each other upon a nearer acquaintance. I judged from your business-like method of reasoning that we will. Now you can consider the matter for a week, if you wish, for I do not desire you to act hurriedly; but of this rest assured, it is one chance in a hundred. In the usual way of building up a practice for yourself, it will take you at least five years or more before you would dare, for instance, to think of marrying."

"Thank you, Mr. Bridges. Really, you take me so by surprise that I am quite overwhelmed. I certainly consider your offer not only a very great compliment, since I can have done nothing as yet to deserve it, but also a very high testimonial of your regard for my father.

Stay! Let me call in and introduce my sisters."

"Not this time. Not this time. If we come to terms, the social relations of our families will soon adjust themselves." So saying, Mr. Bridges took his departure, leaving the astounded young lawyer in a state of exaltation which resulted in his rushing into the dining-room and kissing all three of those maidens, still gossiping over coffee and toast, before he explained himself or the situation.

Then there was a scene which brought Aunt Chloe to the door to see "What in heben dese chillen be about now?"

CHAPTER V.

A WEDDING.

AFTER mature consideration, Willis Peyton saw clearly that he could not hope to do better than take up with lawyer Bridges's offer.

In the course of the following year he came to know all about the business ventures of his sisters, and having nothing but prejudice to interpose, he soon became quite reconciled to having it so; for as soon as they were self-supporting in the new callings, he dared to think of marriage with Kate Kerdolph, whom he loved to distraction, or at least thought he did.

It is quite time that Kate Kerdolph, Will's *fiancée*, should be introduced. Here she comes up Fourteenth Street, with his sisters. She steps like a queen, is slender

and graceful. She dresses in a quiet, refined way, in good material, but plain in cut almost to severity of style; but she has an air of ladyhood about her that enables her to carry this most trying of styles to perfection. Her face is not exactly beautiful, but has something so charming in its expression that it gives the impression of beauty, with something added which many beauties lack, — sweetness and intelligence to illuminate it. She is of medium height, but her marked carriage gives one the impression that she is unusually tall. Her voice is sweet, clear of tone, and adapted to reading or singing, in both of which accomplishments she has been highly cultivated, so that none could question Will's taste. Besides, she belongs to the family of a retired army officer, who sympathized with the South during the War of the Rebellion. He then having just been retired, was not put to the test of declaring his political opinions at the point of the sword.

Willis having been on the "other side," could not help being pleased that his wife's relatives were also; although she was too young to have any opinions of her own, and at present "dead issues" had no charm for her, even as subjects of curiosity. That dreadful time, which divided families and broke up happy homes, was past. "Don't let us speak of it," she said, whenever Willis broached the subject so near to him, he having had the misfortune to be of one opinion, and his dear old father of another.

The girls have been shopping with Kate, for the wedding-day is set, and that event near at hand. They had also been down to Epiphany Church, to look that sacred edifice over, for an army officer of the old *régime* could hardly consent to have a daughter "given away" anywhere else but in that or a Catholic church. It is so easy to give invitations to all one's acquaintances to come to the church ceremony, and the private reception can then be large or small as one may desire.

There had been several family caucuses about the matter. The event would take place early in the new year. The girls, with Aunt Chloe, would keep house. They were now self-supporting in their chosen professions; while Willis would go to his wife's home, she being an only child, and her parents too old and feeble to be left to themselves. It was Willis's second year with Mr. Bridges, the attorney. His salary increased, he felt justified in setting up a family life for himself.

It was one of those exceptionally severe winter storms which occasionally greet Washingtonians, and astonish visitors from the North, who have run away from just such weather, that ushered in Will and Kate's wedding-day. The snow flew in every direction, and drifted in heaps. Horse-cars and vehicles could hardly get about, and that Northern implement, the snow-plough, was brought into active duty. The weather, however, did not block the preparations for the wedding. The chan-

cel in Epiphany was wreathed in smilax; pots of palms and tropical trees stood about; while over the place where the vows were to be pronounced, hung a wedding-bell in pure white rosebuds and daisies.

The stormy day came to an end at last, and eight o'clock rolled around. The church was ablaze with light which gleamed out over the pure white snow with a yellow radiance. Soon guests began to arrive by the carriage load or sleighful, and the body of the great auditorium was well filled up to the seats reserved for the families by a band of white satin ribbon stretched across the aisle.

Ushers in full dress, with white kids on their hands, and lily of the valley *boutonnières*, did the honors of receiving and seating guests according to their social rank, which, for a republican country, is quite a feature of society in the nation's capital; so that filling the office of usher at a stylish wedding is no small task, but requires an intimate acquaintance with the fact that

cabinet families precede those of the Supreme Court, — or do they? for that is still an open question; senators' wives go in before those of the members of the house or citizens; and that the army is the peer of any or all of them. Indeed, to so "usher" as to please all these social sticklers for prestige, requires a goodly degree of diplomatic talent, which ought to be rewarded with a position as *attaché*, or some leading position in the State department.

Just as the clock hands touched nine, the organ began to peal forth the march from Lohengrin, to which so many have stepped from single blessedness to double happiness or misery, as the wheel of the lottery drew them a blank or a prize. Every sound was hushed as the four ushers led in the procession. They were followed by Jessie and Georgia, in white of some soft, floating material; immediately behind them were Colonel Kerdolph, and on his arm his daughter Kate, in a creamy white silk *en traine*, but

almost concealed by a veil which floated, like a summer's misty cloud, about her. A murmur of "How lovely!" greeted her as she passed. Willis followed with his mother-in-law, that was to be, on his arm.

The ushers divided at the altar, and the bridesmaids stood aside while the happy couple took their places, — the parents so that the colonel could give his daughter away, and Jessie convenient to remove the glove for the wedding-ring. They made a very pretty group, when the white surpliced rector came in.

The marriage service of the Episcopal Church has served as a model for marriage services of nearly all the Protestant churches; and although it is sometimes almost ludicrous to hear a poor young man "endowing" his rich bride with all his "worldly goods," and she pronouncing vows of "obedience" that have in most cases become quite obsolete, the service is sweet, solemn, and impressive to those who really wish to be made one in the gospel, as sym-

bolical of the inner marriage, as well as that of the law.

The reception that followed the marriage was confined to the immediate families and a few friends.

"You must cut the cake," said Jessie to Kate. "It is considered good luck to all who eat of it for you to do so."

"There is a ring in it," cried Kate, as she rose to perform the bride's task. "I only hope one of you girls will get it, or Laura Bridges; whoever does will be the next bride."

"Give us generous slices, then," said Georgia, "to double our chances."

In partaking of the refreshments, all formality ceased, and Will insisted on going about and seeing that every one was served; "because," said he, "I always did think this setting a bride and groom apart, to be waited on like babies, would be more than I could stand. I see you meant to pen us up in this corner, but I am determined to get out." So saying, he emerged a free

man so far as ceremony was concerned; and his actions broke the ice of formality, and every one was perfectly at ease and in gay spirits.

"Oh," exclaimed Jessie, "I've bitten the ring! See it! Isn't it handsome? There! I thought I was born to be an old maid, but by this token I shall be the next bride. I warn you, friends, if you wait for my wedding, you may have to wait a good while, since 'I'm o'er young to marry yet,' and have no adorer."

Just then a young man present, one of the ushers, gave her a look of admiration, and thought, "It will not be my fault if she has to say that much longer; for, the bride not excepted, I never saw a handsomer or more charming young woman."

Will turned to Kate, whom he had not neglected, if he did look out for others. "That train we must take leaves within an hour. You'd better steal away, and get into your travelling clothes. I will cover

your retreat by keeping these good people busy."

Kate and Georgia retired, while Will kept up and parried sallies of wit that, like the dewdrops on the grass, are not transferable by any device known to science or art. They glisten and sparkle for a few moments, and are gone; so of wit, it flashes over conversation like "ilka blade o' grass that keeps its ane drop o' dew," but cannot be transplanted or translated without losing its beauty.

When Kate emerged in a dark-brown travelling suit, all of the same material from bonnet to gaiter-top, the guests had returned to the parlors. On entering the carriage, Jessie and Georgia threw their slippers, with fidelity to the traditional future, after them; and they and the ushers shed copious showers of rice over them, thus insuring good luck and good fortune, unless all signs should fail.

"How we shall miss Will," said Georgia, as she and Jessie discussed the wedding in

the privacy of their bedrooms, while they laid aside the beautiful garments, and, worn out, prepared to retire. Even youth and beauty has to refresh itself by nature's balm, — sweet sleep.

"Indeed we will. Of course we shall see them often, and he will look out for us, but he will never be quite the same. Georgia, didn't you think that tall young man, whom Will had for his first usher, very distinguished in appearance?"

"Yes, but he did not make so very much of an impression upon me. He is Senator W.'s son; and you know that they, like preachers' sons, have to be of uncommonly good material to amount to much, although most girls think them great prizes on account of their family position."

"I suppose they do; but he really was a very elegant young man, and as brilliant as could be. He almost equalled Will, who hadn't a bit of dignity, but just made everybody feel at ease."

"The idea of our Will having dignity! You know he always was the most cheerful and best-natured one of the family. He's never blue, whatever happens, and I overheard Mr. Bridges say that he thought Will one of the most promising young men at the bar. He predicted a grand future for him, and seems as much attached to him as though he were a son."

"Well, that arises, no doubt, from the fact that Mr. Bridges lost a son, a bright young man whom he loved so dearly that some seem to think, that on that subject, his loss, he is a little off."

"I shouldn't wonder if he was. It must be a terrible blow to a father to lose a grown-up son on whom he has placed all his affections and hopes for the future."

"How lovely he is in his manner with Laura. She seems to look at him as though she regarded him as the handsomest and smartest man in the world."

"They say she does, and that she is

ambitious for him to go on the Supreme Court Bench. There is nothing that beauty, tact, and sweet womanliness can win, but that she would lay at the feet of her father."

"You grow eloquent, Jess."

"Do I? Well, it seems to me that the most beautiful and tender affection in the world is that between father and daughter, when they fully understand each other."

"Jess, do you know I have often thought if Will had not been already engaged, that he would have liked to have him for a son-in-law?"

"Likely enough, since he admires Will so much. But he also appears to think Kate a very charming person."

"Yes, he does. His manners with women are very nice. He doesn't talk to them as though he regarded them as inferior beings to be talked down to, but as equals, whom he both admires and respects."

"What an 'Admirable Crichton' he

must be! Come, let us resolve not to say another word, but creep into our respective beds, and put out the light before the morning dawns; for, sure as I breathe, the clock is striking three."

CHAPTER VI.

A DISCOVERY.

HOW many brides have made discoveries on their wedding journeys that seemed to upset all their preconceived estimates of their husbands' characters. One bride we knew discovered that the man she had married was partially deranged, before she had been his wife three days.

Now Kate made a discovery not quite so startling as that, but one that caused her no little uneasiness. Will was the tenderest and most loving of husbands, but in a few days she began to observe a tendency to moodiness, a reserve of manner, at intervals, for which she could not account. Therefore, one rainy day while they were still sojourning at a hotel in New York, and did not care to go out

sightseeing in such a storm, she thought it a good opportunity to ask him about it.

Seated on the arm of the big chair in which he silently sat, she put her arms about him, and said, "Will, dear, why don't you tell me what is on your mind? I notice that whenever you have been the brightest, a kind of silence seems to come creeping over you, and you fall into a moody manner that troubles me, because I cannot understand it. Not sorry, are you?"

"My darling, how could you for a moment think of such a thing? I never expect to be sorry, but consider it always Heaven's choicest, best of gifts when it gave me you with your priceless love." So saying, he kissed her tenderly, again relapsing into deep thought.

"Come, that's all very nice that you love me so; but, if you love me, give me your confidence. No secrets between us now, remember. Any old 'loves' that, like Banquo's ghost, '*will not down*'?"

"No, dear; I never loved any woman but you. How could I, having seen you? There *is* something on my mind always; but it is not sentimental, and perhaps would seem inexplicable to you. However, I will tell you, for it so haunts me, you will be sure to find it out."

Kate began to look frightened. What was he going to confess?

"Don't be alarmed, my precious. It is nothing I have done. It is something that I am heir to, — my father's claim against the Government for damages to his estate in depredations and stock confiscated or carried off. It amounts to, at least, a hundred thousand dollars. The very day that father died so suddenly, he was talking about it to me but a few moments before. He said the case was made up, in the hands of an agent in whom he had perfect confidence, the vouchers all in, and his loyalty unquestioned. Therefore, it would soon be paid.

"Now I find that it might have been,

had he lived to conduct it to a close. In every instance where a claim is presented against the Government, the guardians of the public treasury act as though every man with a claim had a disposition to rob the Government; and the fact that I was a rebel prejudices the case against me as one of the heirs. Every move we make meets with a 'check' as much as though we were playing a game, and trying to 'mate' each other with villany.

"To my inquiries I can only get the answer, 'The case is filed. It must take its turn, and be decided on its merits.' Now it is two years since father died. I do not care so much for the money as that I regard it as a trust especially to be guarded and carried to a close for the sake of my sisters, who are women but poorly protected from want because they have a profession; for if sickness overtook either of them, the other would not be able to support two. Besides, I have a pride in the matter. Lovely and accomplished as they are, as

working women they cannot take the place in society to which they are entitled."

"Why, Will, this all seems rather foolish to me. It seems that you have allowed yourself to become morbid on the subject. You do not really need the money. Your position and income are assured in your business relations with 'Judge' Bridges — that is to be; and as for social position, I have that through papa, and your sisters are mine; wherever I go, they can; and I am quite sure that culture and ladyhood, and not occupation, fix one's standard socially in Washington, especially outside of official circles. What care we for all that? Haven't we each other and every comfort we could desire, with as good society as we need outside of official life? which has no special charms for me, its duties and demands are too onerous. Indeed, I have seen many wives of official people who were glad to get out of that stream into the quieter one that flows so

placidly and respectably on, carrying on its bosom the good old families of refinement, who make Washington their permanent home, — people who know how to get the cream of social life, and let alone the skimmed milk; glad to get into literary clubs where all the bright, intellectual people congregate, and where the official standard is not the only one. You see there are reverse sides to every shield."

"Yes, my dear, I agree to all you say; but I seem utterly powerless to throw off this spell. It has been with the greatest difficulty that I have been able to conceal it from the girls. It adds to my despair to think that I shall, inevitably, have to cloud your bright life with its shadow."

"Nonsense! Come, let's go somewhere. You must throw it off. Let it alone. Your agent will prosecute it better than you can; just think it is none of your affair. He will do his best, never fear, as he is working for twenty per cent."

"Perhaps so; but when I consider all the 'red tape' there is to cut or unwind; that it must pass or be rejected by the Departments, run the gantlet of the Court of Claims, perhaps have to go before a Congressional Committee, and teeter back and forth there, between the House and Senate, one perhaps taking it up this year, the other the next, and never both together, — I know of one claimant who has been twenty-four years prosecuting a spoliation claim that has passed one or the other of the houses of Congress sixteen times, to finally be vetoed by the President, when lucky enough to pass both, — I confess I feel like despair. It is so fixed in my mind *as a trust* left by my father, that I shall prosecute it until I'm gray, or dead."

"Oh, don't talk so, Will! you make me feel creepy."

"Well, now, you see what a hold it has upon me, don't you?"

"Let's go to the theatre to-night. It has stopped raining, I do believe; and,

anyway, we should take a cab, so what matter?

"'Tis better to laugh than be sighing;
'Tis better to hope than be crying,"

she warbled in a lovely mezzo.

Will jumped up, and cheerfully struck in with his rich baritone, the spell for the time being routed.

After a two weeks' holiday and honeymoon, Will and Kate returned to Washington, quite willing to come down to the plane upon which ordinary mortals live, who for the nonce neither marry nor are given in marriage.

Kate's parents, both being feeble and well on in years, insisted on giving up the house with all its contents to the young people, as a wedding present, reserving for themselves a suite of rooms on the second floor. Thus she at once came into the responsibilities of family life; but, having virtually had them for some time before, she felt quite equal to the emer-

gency, especially as she would have Will to help her.

There was much in Kate's home that was rare, beautiful, and precious, besides the furniture. Her father had followed the traditions of the army, that the best choice of a wife for an officer is, generally, an officer's daughter. There are families in army and navy circles that can date their aristocratic records back to Revolutionary days. Such families have heirlooms: silver service, gold or silver "medals" for distinguished services, which, though poor, they prefer to so much in cash as the value of it.

Colonel Kerdolph had distinguished himself in various Indian wars, and had gathered together quite a collection, illustrative of the life and habits of the aboriginal man; while Mrs. Kerdolph had as much pride in their possession as their actual owner, and she took such care of them that, old as they were, all were in a good state of preservation.

Her manners were very high-bred and stately, as became an officer's wife; and she took no little pride in keeping up her social status, on her husband's half-pay as a retired officer, so that, apparently, it made no appreciable difference in their style of living, although there doubtless was economy somewhere.

Kate had, in one sense, disappointed her parents. It was their desire that she should marry an army or naval officer, many of whom are always stationed in Washington; but since she would not avail herself of her privileges in that direction, they were glad that so unobjectionable a person as Will, a rising young lawyer, was chosen. They accepted the inevitable with a good grace, and received him with the cordiality due the husband of their only child, and a son.

The first social event that Kate undertook after paying her wedding calls, was to give a *musicale*. There was Professor Carman and his wife; Mr. Bridges's lovely

daughter, Laura, who possessed a rich contralto voice; Mr. Wells, a noted tenor; Mr. Daggett, a celebrated baritone; and Will's sisters, who also had good voices. The occasion would enable her to invite a number of people who were appreciators, if not performers; and thus she could enter upon her social life, as a married woman, with much less trouble and risk than a reception or dinner party would involve.

The eventful evening arrived, and with it her guests. Her mother and father had places of honor assigned them, for they were not the kind of people to be left to themselves if guests were in the house. Their old-fashioned, high-bred courtesy gave an air of distinction to Kate's little parties always. Her father's military bearing, and her mother in black velvet or satin, with soft, old laces on her hair and breast, was as pretty a picture of graceful old age as could be imagined.

Laura Bridges arrived in company with

her father, for between these two an affection existed as rare as beautiful; and, as she had no mother living, he made her his companion, — one who shared his confidence, and understood his ambitions and aims in life far better than many wives do their husbands'.

Professor Carman and his professional wife came later, the professor with his pet violin case swinging in his hand. When she sung, he often accompanied the piano and voice with a ripple of stringed melody that was most ravishing.

Jessie and Georgia were on hand, having been there to dinner; and Mr. Wells and Mr. Daggett were soon announced, closely followed by Senator Warner's son, the usher whom Jessie and Georgia discussed the evening of the wedding. Several other people of both sexes also appeared, and the musical programme began.

The professor and his wife played a kind of overture on the violin and piano, after which she sang delightfully an operatic air;

then there were tenor and baritone solos, followed by a duet by Kate and Jessie, after which the company fell into groups or *tête-à-tête.*

Jessie found herself in the latter position with young Mr. Warner; and, as she talked, she secretly admired his fine figure, his shapely head with curly brown hair, under which shone a pair of bright, but kind, blue eyes. He, evidently, was desirous of making a good impression.

"Miss Peyton, I am charmed to find that you sing. Now I do not know one note from another, but I do know what pleases my ear. Do you sing ballads? I am especially fond of Scotch ballads."

"So am I," replied she; "but Georgia, my sister, is a better ballad singer than I am."

"I wonder if she will favor us? It always strikes me like a refreshing breeze in the cool, summer woods, to hear an old ballad sung after a florid and intricate opera air, which calls for great execution.

I like both; but, probably for want of a cultivated ear, I prefer the simpler sorts of music, such as people sing at home, when everybody joins in the chorus."

"The old songs do wear best, because they voice the pathos and feeling of humanity just in song as in story," replied Jessie, much interested. "There is Georgia, now. Perhaps she will sing a Scotch ballad for you if you ask her."

"I should be delighted. Miss Georgia, your sister says you sing ballads divinely. Now I shall be most happy to conduct you to the piano, if you will favor us."

"Certainly: I shall be pleased to do my part now, as well as another time, since that is what my sister Kate has me down for, 'Within a Mile of Edinboro' Town,'" and going to the instrument, she sang that so exquisitely, that, in response to a demand for another, she gave, "The Lass o' Gowrie."

By this time refreshments were announced, and all repaired to the dining-

room, Mr. Warner taking Jessie out, and waiting upon her with the assiduity of a knight of old. In truth, he was very much in love with the beautiful young girl beside him; and it cooled the fever in his blood to fly about in her behalf, proffering her every dainty.

Such suppers, where light refreshments are washed down with chocolate or coffee, are not worthy of a special description, since everybody knows all about them, and that a collation, like good music, has a wonderful tendency to loosen the tongue. Even a cup of coffee, with plain cake, should always be a concomitant of any event that would be a success, from a church social to *musicales* or other small parties, as every successful hostess knows. We may talk of purely intellectual entertainments; but so long as men and women are not intellectual, and nothing else, eating will be accessory to sociability.

By the time the evening was over, young Warner had inwardly resolved that he

would win Jessie if he could, though he knew there would be a good-sized lion in the way on account of the prejudices of his aristocratic mother, as he had accidentally learned that Miss Peyton was a kindergarten teacher and a working girl, one of a class upon whom his mother looked as inferior beings, — beings with feelings a little less refined and sensitive than her own. As for her son choosing such a person for a wife, the idea was not to be considered for a moment. Now, strange as it may seem, mother and son had never exchanged a word on the subject, yet he, knowing her haughty bearing and her exclusive tastes, saw trouble ahead just as clearly as though there had been. All the same, his mind, so firm, like his honored father's, was made up; and somehow, some time, he meant to have it out with his mother, if he could first win Jessie.

Of course Jessie was quite oblivious of all this thought about herself. She only knew a very distinguished-looking young

man was paying her attentions that were very agreeable to receive. If she had had an idea that anybody, even his mother, would object to them, she would scornfully have found a way to send him about his business; for she so truly respected herself that she felt she was in no sense, save position, inferior to even a Mrs. Senator.

Will cheerfully acquiesced when Claude Warner offered to save him the trouble of escorting his sisters to their home. At the door, he asked for the privilege of calling upon them at some future time, which was granted without scruple. Aunt Martha Frank, their father's widowed sister, had come on to make her home with them (she having no children), and they were only too glad to have her company and motherly care. She did not go to Kate's *musicale*, as she was suffering with a cold, and thought the home fireside the best place for her under the circumstances. Feeling her position as chaperone, she had not retired, but received the girls at the door on their return.

CHAPTER VII.

COMPLEXITIES.

MR. BRIDGES had met the one great temptation of his life; that is, if to reach the goal of one's ambition is to be considered as among the temptations.

He had been offered a high judicial position, — one that would eminently have satisfied an honorable ambition, — and had deliberately set it aside. He had opinions not quite free enough from bias to be considered judicial; nor were they quite in accord with those of the president appointing him. Therefore, being a man of an unusually keen sense of integrity, he reluctantly felt obliged, after due deliberation, to decline the honor.

Laura knew all the points of doubt in his mind. She shared in his ambition, but

she was prouder of her father in his declination than she would have been in his acceptance of the high position. Nothing further could be said of a daughter's loyalty and devotion. She actually made him feel ashamed, she so idealized and adored him as the most perfect of men. What could she really know of his life, the life a man shows to his wife? He had loved his wife with an affection amounting to romance, and yet she, he felt, must have seen his imperfections, such as lie hidden from the world in the nature of every man, the very best. Still, Laura's adoration was very sweet to him, and it kept him from forming new ties, lest he might alienate or wound so unusual a love.

This morning he had just come into the office, where he found Will already deeply interested in a case to come up soon in the criminal court.

"Have you decided, judge?"

"Yes: you will have to call me colonel, or major, or something of that sort, since

I cannot conscientiously accept, and I will not do so otherwise."

"You astound me! Going to throw over such an opportunity as that?"

"*I must.*"

A light seemed to dawn upon Will's mind: the comprehension of the character of a man whose integrity could neither be bought nor sold. There he stood, the most honest man, truly, that he had ever seen; one of a hundred. His admiring wonder grew; and, seizing the Hon. Mr. Bridges's hand, he wrung it, saying, "I sincerely honor your judgment and character."

The older man was touched, and his eyes moistened.

"Well, well, we can live without office, but I own I would rather have sacrificed many thousands a year to have sat upon that bench, if I could; but I cculdn't, and there's the end of it.

"How are you getting on with that case?" he continued. "It is set for next Monday, I believe. If you find any diffi-

culty about making up the argument, come to me; otherwise not, as I do not care to appear in it if I can help myself."

The Hon. Mr. Bridges went out. No sooner was he gone than Will dropped off into one of those moody silences which came all too often when he was alone, and his attention distracted for a moment from his work, whatever it might be.

Presently Mr. Bridges returned, but Will was so lost in revery that he did not arouse. His friend gave him a searching look. It was not the first time he had seen him under the numbing influence of those dark moods. He felt that it was a delicate matter to speak to him about, but somehow he must be made to feel that an unhealthy despondency always has a tendency to undermine and weaken the faculties; that it would lay a paralyzing hand upon a man's success, and prevent him from grasping what an inferior man with a cheerful temperament might. Being an astute legist, accustomed to reading human

character, he had observed enough of Will's marital relations to be assured that there was no trouble there. It must be that tantalizing, gigantic claim of his father's. Of all things to harass, depress, and worry a man, a big claim against the Government is the worst. No wonder the claim agents haunt the Congressional halls, the departments, and courts, waiting, waiting, waiting for money justly due their clients; waiting, waiting, waiting for fees justly due them until, little by little, they grow poorer and poorer, credit gone, cursed by their clients, denounced as harpies, vampires, jackals, by the Government that withholds, on one pretext or another, money justly due men and women who have sacrificed their all that it might live. All this because it is an "exceptional case," not provided for by "statutory law." See the French Spoliation Claims, the Mexican Border Claim, the Wiel Claim, and thousands of minor claims; when the waiting heirs die, others step into their places; attor-

neys die, become insane, or take to drink, utterly ruined by that *ignis fatuus* that lures them on; and all the while a surplus in the United States Treasury! Some of it, long years since appropriated by "arbitration," that highest of earthly tribunals, to pay those very claims.

It is a fearful arraignment; and were an individual debtor to act with the dilatoriness, the suspicion, the undue caution, which the Government exercises, it would be denounced as infamous. Verily, republics are ungrateful now, as in the past.

Thus soliloquized Mr. Bridges, as he furtively watched Will's mood. Presently he said, "Willis, how is that claim of your father's getting along? Any progress? I hope it is not troubling you."

"It is not getting on at all," said Will, rousing himself with an effort. "They will do nothing with it in the departments, my father's loyalty not being enough, as mine is in question now. It seems I not only nearly broke his dear old heart by

going with my State, as I felt obliged to, but I am destined, as a reward for having acted conscientiously, to have the penalty wreaked upon the unoffending women of the family. They are not politicians, voters, or fighters; but, because I was, they must lose their inheritance."

"Come, come, don't look at the matter in that light! It is a morbid view you are taking. Let me advise you to have patience. Perhaps a little personal attention given to the matter before the Congressional Committee might expedite matters. Likely enough the agent has used up his last dollar in pushing his claims through. If he must have a 'retainer' to go on, draw on me, young man. I've no doubt you will live to repay it with interest. Only I do not like to see you grow moody over it. Besides, to encourage that sort of thing by indulgence, always works harm in a man's business relations; prevents success when it is most needed. You must put it out of your mind until this case is

off our hands. I am satisfied the wrong man is indicted for murder, but it is going to take skilful arguing to make the jury see it. You will need all your faculties wide awake to do it, for I mean to let you have all the glory of this victory. To get it, you will have to fight for it. Therefore you will excuse me for being so plain in speaking to you."

"Indeed, I will," said the young man in reply. "I realize that I have no better friend or wiser counsellor in all the world than you are, and I will do my best to win this case, and throw off this horrible spell that sometimes inthralls me."

Soon the Hon. Mr. Bridges took his leave, and Will began to consult authorities in making up his case. He had not long been so engaged before he was interrupted by a call from Mr. Warner.

"Digging away, old fellow, are you? I hope to graduate myself soon. If I pass, I shall go West, and grow up with the country, for there are not many such

chances as you have had to go into business in a settled community like this."

"I am well aware of that, and trust I appreciate my privileges. Can I do anything for you to-day?"

"Well, yes, possibly. Knowing that you are a Southern type of man, I've paid my respects to you first, as the natural guardian of your charming sisters, to ask your permission to address your sister Jessie."

"Hadn't you better wait until you are established? I should not be willing that my sister should form such an alliance, even prospectively, with a person so unobjectionable as yourself, unless I was assured he could give her a good home."

"I presume I might wait, if I would or could. I am not made on the deliberate plan. If you consent to my addressing her, all right; if not, I should admire afar until she is of legal age; when, this being a free country, I shall try my chances, and,

she being willing, I would defy the world, or — her brother."

Will smiled. He had been in love himself, and he really did like Claude, and had no doubt of his future ability to maintain a wife; so he said, "Well, old fellow, since your heart is set upon it, I give you my blessing, but am by no means so sure of Jessie. She is a proud, independent, self-respecting young woman, and your family will have to receive her as one of themselves, if at all. However, you can try your luck."

"Thank you, thank you! Give me your hand on that. My family will either receive any wife I take as one of themselves, or they can dispense with me. I should go with her in that case."

"You do not know Jessie. She will never have you, or any one else, until she is cordially received; that is, if she would have you anyhow, for she is not a ripe peach, to drop into the arms of the first man who comes along, and says he likes peaches and cream."

"All the better for her. I would not like a woman too easy to win. She might not wear well."

So saying, he put on his hat, rushed downstairs three steps at a time, and out into the street, along a block or two at a tearing pace; round the corner of Pennsylvania Avenue, up toward New York Avenue, for he knew that Jessie's school, in that quiet neighborhood, closed about two, and if he hurried he might overtake her on her way home, as he had done many times before. It was clear that they were at least very good friends.

On he went, meeting acquaintances, but merely bowing and passing. What does an ardent young man in love want with mere acquaintances, anyhow? He overtook her just as she entered the northeast corner of Franklin Square.

Mocking-birds were singing in the maple-trees, and the pecans and magnolias cast their beauty and fragrance on the April air, while beds of hyacinths of all colors,

tulips, daffodils, and jonquils, bordered many a circle with their loveliness.

Together they walked to a seat near the fountain in the centre, where, in a few simple, manly words, he told his love, and asked her for her hand.

She was not quite overcome with surprise, for, with a maiden's intuition, she had felt it coming. Still, now that she knew that he was her lover, she was not quite sure enough of herself to answer him as he wished. She could only say as yet, "I like you, thoroughly respect you, but do not know whether I can love you or not. You must give me time to examine myself," — blushing sweetly, for she was usually so pale that a blush on her cheek looked like the petal of a soft pink rose. He was satisfied for the time. It was quite as much as he could expect from a girl of her cool type. She never looked lovelier in his eyes than when giving him half an answer.

On resuming their walk, he unfolded all

his plans and prospects, at the very last saying, "I feel bound to tell you that my mother would probably be opposed to my choice until she knew you, but I think I can bring her over."

"Say no more, dear friend. Your mother must willingly accept me as her daughter, or I will not accept her son."

Defiant as this speech was, it seemed to be as a sweet morsel to Claude. First, it admitted that she probably would, all things being favorable, accept his suit. Such is the way in which a young man very much smitten finds consolation, even in adversity. But Jessie had no idea that in saying what she did about his mother she had made any admissions at all.

They reached the little house at last, and Jessie said, "Come in, will you not? We must tell Aunty Frank about it. She is the same as a mother to us girls; and you will find that she is a reasonable being, if I am not, on some things we've been talking about."

He went in, and did not come out again until after the five-o'clock dinner.

Aunt Frank knew Jessie better than that young lady knew herself. A certain maidenly reserve, a something indefinable, kept the young girl from owning what she felt. At heart she really did like Claude very much, but she did not like the possible attitude of the mother who might be "hers-in-law;" consequently, Aunty Frank kept Claude there with a veiled, womanly tact that did more for his success than any words she might have spoken to Jessie in the way of advice. Besides, she heartily believed in a genuine affection. If it was there, no friend would be needed at court, or elsewhere, to say so for those most interested. She simply contented herself with making things pleasant for all without fussiness.

CHAPTER VIII.

MOTHER AND SON.

IN some houses the dining-room seems to be, if not the battle-ground of the family, the place where the opinions of its members are most freely ventilated. The fault-finding person always sees material to vent his sarcasms upon with the inevitable mishaps that occur in the *cuisine* of most households at times, such as under-done pork, over-done roast beef, slack-baked biscuit, or burnt bread. Minds of opposite bias, especially if they are male minds, clash on politics or religion, while personal likings and dislikings are freely discussed.

There is a great deal said and written about cheerfulness at the table being productive of digestion, but some persons seem to have a theory that does not square with

their practice; and many a little hostess has been sitting on figurative pins and needles, when she has seen those of her household who, by consanguinity, ought to be good friends, on the verge of pitching into each other's opinions with a free lance, likely to draw some blood, at the family table.

In the household of Senator Warner, there was usually a well-bred reticence on tabooed subjects, a respect for others' opinions that avoided captious criticism, although it was plainly to be seen that that popular senator did not always agree with his better-half on social topics, which she, with good nature, declared "he knew nothing about." How could he, being so much occupied with public business? while her best efforts in life were given to understanding the social code in the polite society of Washington, and fulfilling her duties therein.

Mrs. Warner and Claude lingered over their coffee after the senator had finished his breakfast and gone to his private room

with his secretary, discussing a reception of the evening before given by one of the diplomatic corps.

"Claude, I notice that you are not prompt in your attendance at such places, as you once were. You are devoting yourself too exclusively, I fear, to your studies. Situated as we are, it is not necessary for you to give all your leisure to study. Society has advantages not to be ignored, and there are some charming young girls that I wish you would cultivate."

"Dear mamma, haven't you yet discovered that I care very little for the average 'charming young girl'?"

"But you should. It's a grave defect, a want of taste on your part, not to do so. There are really so few young men who can afford to devote as much time to society as you can, that you ought to attend more of these afternoons in senatorial and official *salons*, and be a leader of the German, or a noted figure in the 'Lancers.'"

"Truly, a noble ambition! No, I thank

you; I do not care for such distinction. Let the young army and naval officers, who have nothing else to do, display their uniforms, agility, and gallantry all at the same time. I have no ambition or call for a Chesterfieldian vocation."

"It is strange you do not care more for the charms of society, after all the pains I have taken to give you every accomplishment befitting your station."

"Perhaps if I had been a daughter, I might have improved my opportunities better."

"Oh, I almost forgot something I meant to say this morning. Yesterday, when driving out on K Street, near Fourteenth, I saw you promenading with a very pretty girl, evidently not in our set; she was not stylish enough for that. I hope you are not getting entangled with acquaintances that will be difficult to get away from."

Claude flushed hotly. "Well, dear mamma, I presume that when a young man is twenty-three, as I am, he is old enough

to know a lady when he meets her, whether she be in an official circle or not. That particular young woman happens to be most charming; I only wish you knew her."

"Who is she? You speak warmly, and pique my curiosity."

"Nothing would be easier than to gratify it. She is Miss Jessie Peyton, sister to the young man who is associated with the Honorable Mr. Bridges in practice of the law. She and her sister reside with a widowed aunt out Fourteenth Street, near Meridian Hill. You have only to call or send your card. I really wish you would; for I confess to a deep interest in the young lady, whom I met at her brother's wedding last winter in Epiphany, where I acted as usher, with several other good fellows, friends of his."

"You surely do not mean that you are in *earnest?*"

"I do, indeed; I am very much in earnest, never more so in my life. I have asked the young lady's brother for permis-

sion to address her, and since I've asked her for her hand. It all depends, she says, on the attitude of my family toward her. She is worthy, if she is comparatively obscure, to grace any station; and those not willing to receive *her* may as well say good-by to *me*," spoke up Claude, with flashing eyes.

"Oh!" screamed Mrs. Warner, and fell over in a state that looked so alarming that Claude was frightened. Giving the bell-pull a jerk, he summoned her maid, and rushed out after a doctor, with whom he soon returned.

Mrs. Warner, being past middle life, was no longer a sylph in figure. Her maid had, with the help of the senator, who rushed in, alarmed at the noise, lifted her on to the sofa in the sitting-room, where she lay with clinched teeth, rigid limbs, and rolled-up, half-shut eyes, the picture of death in a most hideous guise.

Claude and the doctor appeared upon the scene; and that astute practitioner lowered

his eyes softly and swallowed, as if he inwardly said, "I know all about it; I've met such cases in my varied experience before. No danger, no danger," while he outwardly expressed great concern for the alarming condition of the patient.

"She has been laboring under some great and sudden excitement, hasn't she?" said he.

Claude colored, and said, "Yes, possibly. We were discussing social questions, when she suddenly fell over with an outcry, and into this state."

The maid kept on chafing her hands, and the doctor prepared something in the way of a restorative, and forced it between her teeth; but she could not swallow. Nothing seemed to do any good; for hours she lay as if stupefied or paralyzed, but at last she threw up her arms wildly, and returned to reviving life with a scream that sent a thrill of horror through those who heard, so unearthly was it.

"Keep her quiet; don't let her become

agitated. She will be better soon, I think; but the slightest excitement will cause a relapse, the consequences of which may be serious. I will call again before bed-time."

Claude went out with him. "Doctor, what is it? I could see no reason why my mother should fall into that state because of anything I was saying, although I will not deny that we were both a little excited, but not more so than we have been often before on various subjects. Somehow, I am not quite in sympathy with my mother on the social side of life. I assure you it was nothing more."

"Well, let it be a lesson to you, young man, not to cross your mother with impunity. At her age, a gentleman should always be as tender and regardful of a woman's feelings as though she were sweet sixteen. They are about as easy to understand, full of whims, and must be treated with consideration. You understand?"

Medical men often feel justified and in duty bound to indulge in such plainness of speech.

Claude loved his mother tenderly, if they did occasionally disagree, and he promised the doctor that he would endeavor to be more careful hereafter. Going in, he sat down on a hassock beside his mother, and kissed her hands, calling her many fondly foolish names, at which she smiled pathetically, as much so as so plump a creature could.

"Claude, you will drop that odious girl, for my sake? I have other plans for you, my son."

After what the doctor had said to him, what could he do? Not refuse, and throw her into another fit of hysteria; and as for denying or denouncing Jessie, he would cut his manly tongue out before he would forswear her. Therefore, he deliberately acted a lie by pressing that clammy hand within his own, and his lips firmly together, with an inward vow of constancy to the one he loved best. Yes, he knew it now. He loved her better than the mother that bore him. Greater love than this has no

man for a woman. Jessie was safe in his heart; but he realized that no stone would be left unturned by his mother, to break up the match between them, so proud and imperious was she.

The senator, finding her quietly sleeping, went away, marvelling much that, after these long years, and when they were quite out of fashion, the wife of his bosom, the most conventional of women, had allowed herself in a fit of passion to fall into hysterics, — a "fit" that, once having been seen, no one could ever again be mistaken in, or imposed upon by its recurrence and vagaries. He had noticed, also, that the doctor, while expressing great interest in the case, had not apparently been alarmed; he was probably another man who knew the baffling disease at sight, and that it seldom killed, although it might result in insanity.

Going to the door and seeing Claude beside her, he beckoned to him to come out. Closing the door softly, and motioning him to a chair, he said, —

"What were you talking about with your mother, Claude, when she 'collapsed'?"

It is dreadful to own it, but that grave senator actually fell into slang in alluding to the condition of his wife. No one knew better her fine points, and, in a way, she was dear to him. No one knew her weaknesses more clearly than he; but, up to this moment, he had never unbent his dignity so much as the line of a hair as to own it to his son by word or look. He was reticence personified; nor did he mean to now, but he must know what excited her so. That last time it was jealousy of him, not altogether without cause; and then she never let up her "tantrums" until he had broken the bond that had bound him. What could Claude have done?

Claude was so much shocked to hear his father use the word "collapse" in regard to what looked to his inexperienced eyes like a serious case, that he had to pause to consider what he had best say; for he never remembered to have heard his father

speak flippantly before of his mother, and he feared the old gentleman's wits might be wandering. Such are the revelations in family life that come to the surface in sudden crises.

"Well, father, I did not see anything to upset mamma in what I was saying. She was calling me to account for walking with a charming young lady to whom I am as good as engaged."

"Engaged? you sly puppy! No wonder it threw her off her pins. Who is she? I must have a hand in it, if it is anything so serious as that."

"She is a perfectly respectable person; a sister to a rising young lawyer in Bridges's office, — beautiful and accomplished as even my lady mother. Her only misfortune is that she is, for the present, poor; but the family are Virginians, and have a hundred-thousand-dollar prospective claim against the Government. Her father was loyal, but her brother was on the other side; therefore they are likely

to remain poor for some time, as no claims are paid with a taint of disloyalty about the claimants, either with or without special legislation. In the mean time, my *fiancée* is a kindergarten teacher, and I honor her for it; but she is as proud as a queen, and will scorn me unless I can bring my family to receiving her cordially. That is the condition of my acceptance on that point." He paused for breath.

His father swung round on his swivel chair, with his fingers interlaced meditatively across his rotund stomach. "I see, I see! Yes, no doubt that did astound my lady. I sympathize with you, you sly dog, you; but we will have to be very cautious how we approach your mamma on the subject; that is, I see no objection to the girl. I do not believe but that you will find a better wife in her, if you can overcome her scruples as to being received by *us*, than you would in the belle of the ball-room. It is rather comical, this having an obscure young chit making terms about

us. Most girls would take you on any terms, so anxious are they to get into circles a little above their level."

"She is not a 'chit,' father, nor is she that kind of a girl. She is as cool, independent, and self-respecting a person as I have ever seen in any circle, and bewitching as cool."

"No doubt of it! no doubt of it, at all. I see you are a chip of the old block. Just like me. Never fear, my boy. You will get her yet; but my advice is based upon some experience of life. You had better not tell her just yet of this little *contretemps* here, or how your mother feels about it. Leave it to time and accident. Accident is often wiser than design. In the mean time, be very attentive to your mother. If she is imperious, she is a very loving woman, and at bottom sensible.

"You had best be conciliatory and patient, since I am on your side, and should be pleased to be introduced some day to your spirited young lady, at the Capitol."

"Thanks, governor. You have won my eternal admiration and gratitude. I didn't know you had so much heart about you. I say it with all due respect."

"No, I suppose not. We older folks, in young thoughts, are supposed to be burned-out volcanoes, desert wastes of affection, while in truth we are only, the oldest of us, big boys on our dignity. Circumstances prove us sometimes to be as inflammable as so much tow."

Claude, having seen both parents in new *rôles*, went out to walk, cool off, and think it over.

CHAPTER IX.

WILLIS AND HIS TRIUMPH.

WILLIS PEYTON threw himself into the criminal suit in which the firm was engaged with all the ardor of a young man desirous not only to defend his client from injustice, but to carve his name one round higher on the ladder of fame.

Looking into the case, he found that the young man was probably in danger of losing his life; but to prove his innocence would require painstaking, direct reasoning from one point to another, proved up, step by step, so that the most dull of jurymen could see it with convincing power. How he worked in making up the defence! He felt obliged to account for his client's time from hours before the murder up to the very moment and act. In going over the

argument with Mr. Bridges, he was congratulated upon the directness and forcibleness of the points he had taken.

"I can hardly conceive of a jury, even if prejudiced, that could withstand that, or a judge who would construe the law for conviction on such a statement. I predict, Will, that this case will establish your fame in the criminal practice, the most difficult field in the law, since society, in its wrath at the horrors of a crime, sometimes seems to think the criminal beyond the line of justifiable defence, and the lawyer who takes it up, obnoxious."

The client's case was something like this: One night a young man of good habits and well esteemed was on his way to visit his sweetheart. In passing through an open square, where buildings were only on one side of the street, he was waylaid and deliberately murdered, on the public highway, in a fast-becoming fashionable quarter of the city. As he fell, he cried out; and a policeman not far off, ran to the spot, to

find a man bending over the body, with a bloody knife in his hand, the victim already dead. True, the man coolly arose and said, "I was about to enter a house across the way, when I heard a scuffle and an outcry. I ran over here, found this knife sticking in this man s heart, which I pulled out, and the blood spurted over me as you see."

"Come along! You are a cool one; but I will beat your brains out with my club if you try to resist me until I can bring help here," said the policeman, seizing him by the collar with one hand, and putting his whistle to his mouth with the other, when he blew such a blast as brought two or more of his comrades to the spot within a very few moments.

"All right, cap'n, I will go along without trouble; for I tell you truly that I had nothing to do with killing this man. I came over at his cry of distress out of pure humanity; but, as I came, I saw three men running away in that direction. I was

simply going to make an evening visit, nothing more, when this unfortunate affair occurred."

"Murderers are generally glib liars, but you are the coolest one I ever came across yet. Bob, let's put the bracelets on him, before he gives us the slip."

Thus George Morrison was summarily disposed of, while the murdered man was carried into a drug-store close at hand, a great crowd having collected like grasshoppers from no one knew whither. Crowds thus come together in cities, when pale death rides by on a pistol shot or the point of a dirk, and when the fire-fiend casts ruddy gleams of destruction across the midnight sky.

The police were baffled; the prisoner was such a peaceable, respectable-looking man, not quite up to their standard of gentleman, but his very appearance conciliated the public as soon as they had seen him. The cold-bloodedness of the affair, so early in the evening, no motive apparent, — it was a most curious case, with a veil of mystery

about it that only the romancers tried to solve; and they said that there must be a woman at the bottom of it, with, possibly, jealousy as its motive.

No traces of any other person near the victim could be found up to the day of the trial.

That day of fate arrived. The prisoner was calm, and to his lawyer's satisfaction had accounted for all his actions during the day of the crime; and Willis set about the Herculean task of finding witnesses to prove every statement.

If you are not a criminal lawyer, you will have no idea of the immense difficulty of proving up one's conduct for even a whole day. Simple, personal statement will not do. The witnesses seem suddenly to have been affected by a spell, and disperse to the ends of the earth; others take that important time of all others to die, having said nothing of what they know, and now never can reveal it until the dead give up their secrets. Others grow timid, conceal themselves, or are careful not to

"say anything," lest they have to appear on the stand; while still others deliberately lie, to pay off an old score, or to make sure that blood for blood is spilt, according to the Mosaic law.

The steps, however, had been traced, and the links of defence firmly welded into an argument that satisfied as astute a mind as ever grappled with criminal practice, — the Hon. Samuel Bridges. He and Willis found their way into the court-room in the City Hall on the eventful morning. The judge was on the bench; the lawyers arrayed around the bar; the jury filed in, and went to their box at the judge's right hand, and sat themselves down in a row where they could see and hear everything going on; the prisoner came in, escorted by a bailiff, and took his seat by his lawyer.

The prosecuting attorney arose, and stated the case. He expatiated upon the terrible shock to the community by the sudden "taking off" of so young and

inoffensive a life. He had tried, he said, to find some motive for the crime, but had been utterly powerless to do so. Every effort had been used to trace out the men that the prisoner alleged he saw running away, but no discoveries had, to his knowledge, been made. He appealed to the jury to look at the facts, and then, as fellow-men, subject to similar peril, to say what should be done.

Here Willis made an "objection" to having appeals to the feelings of the jury made at this stage of the proceedings. The judge sustained the objection, thereupon the attorney simply said, "I have stated the case. The circumstances all point to the prisoner at the bar as the murderer. If he is not, the burden of proof lies upon his counsel, as this court has no object in view but to see that simple justice is given to every man. If guilty, judgment; if not, that freedom from penalty to which he is entitled;" and then he sat down.

Willis arose, and calmly stated that he should endeavor to prove his client's innocence, which he proposed doing by the mouth of witnesses.

At the summons of the court they came in, and were examined and cross-examined; but all the while the climax was approaching. Willis grew pale with excitement as his last witness was called, and took his place on the stand. He was a respectable white man, a mechanic in a plain working-suit. Honesty was written on every line of his well-bronzed face. Perhaps it was no special merit that he was honest and upright, since he was born so; and the jury, to a man, was impressed by his appearance. They felt that what he would have to tell, no cross-examination would be likely to shake. There was an air of self-respect about the man for the lawyers' quibbling to grapple with.

The man being sworn, Willis said, —

"Where were you on the night of the murder?"

"I was on my way home from a grocery store, about two squares from where I live."

"Do you know anything about this murder?"

"I do."

"What do you know?"

"On the evening of the murder, I was on my way from the grocery, and in a great hurry. I cut across a vacant lot. When about half-way across, I saw three colored men coming east on the open side of the street, and opposite to them I saw a man walking briskly, so that they came together about half-way of the square. When they met, I saw the single man throw up his arms with a sharp cry; and, as he fell, those ruffians ran away as fast as they could, while a man standing at the steps of a house across the way ran down, on hearing the noise, to the prostrate man. I hurried away as fast as I could, for it was a case of life and death with me, just having had a telegram from my folks that

my father was dying, and wished, if possible, to see me once more. I did not want to be detained, all my arrangements having been made to start for the West on the ten-o'clock train."

"What had you been to the grocery for?"

"To get credit for my family supplies until my return."

"Why did you not let some one hear from you? You must have seen something of the mystery about this murder in the papers?"

"I did not read the papers for several days — indeed, for a week — after reaching my father's house. There was death and the funeral; but as soon as I arrived home, which was only a few days ago, I did make known to lawyer Peyton what I knew, and my desire to testify, hoping to save an innocent man; for I saw those three colored men I spoke of fall upon that single man, and murder him."

"How do you know they were colored

men, and the murdered man a white man?"

"Well, those three had been singin' only a little while before they caught sight of the man they killed. No one can *mistake a darkey's singin'*; and they walked with the shamblin' gait that the lower classes of colored people do. The other man, he looked and walked brisker, with a firmer tread, like a nervous white man."

Being through his statement, he was submitted to a most searching cross-examination by the prosecuting attorney, who tried every device known to the law to shake his assertions, but without avail. His straightforward, unvarnished tale was most convincing *that the man at the bar was not the murderer.*

At its conclusion, there broke out a ripple of irrepressible applause, calling forth the judge's prompt "Silence!"

When Willis rose to present his argument, there was a breathless silence in the court-room. He had no need to make a

special appeal to the jury. In a few eloquent words he submitted the case.

The prosecuting attorney rose as he sat down, and bowing to the judge and to Will with dignity, said, "The district submits the case without further argument."

The judge then explained what constituted circumstantial evidence, the weight to be given to it, the demands of society for protection through severe penalties for the taking of life; and added, "If the proof is sufficient, the prisoner should have the benefit of it, even if the murder was for the time shrouded in mystery. According to the laws of God, and experience, most obscure murders, even after years of silence, come to light through some little loop left by the assassin. With that they have nothing to do; but with the man arraigned at the bar, was he guilty, or not? If so, convict him; if not, release him."

The jury arose and filed out, while everybody sat down with an air of expectancy,

for the prisoner's innocence of the crime was patent to all.

They had not long to wait. In the course of half an hour, the bailiff announced that the jury were ready to render a verdict. "Let them come in," said the judge. The jury marched back again, and going into their places, stood up. As the foreman arose, he said, "Your honor, we find the prisoner not guilty."

Then the judge responded, "The prisoner at the bar is at liberty to go where he will, his innocence having been fully established."

Even the judge looked pleased, and friends who had coolly or critically looked on, now flocked around, extending congratulations to the prisoner and his attorney. None were more cordial than those which came from the members of the bar, who recognized a rising light in the cold, critical atmosphere of their profession, in young Peyton.

But the congratulation Will wanted, no

man was capable of giving him. One word from the lips of the woman he loved was worth all this praise; one kiss of hers on such a day would lift him as near heaven as mortal man ever gets this side of the grave. Home he speedily went, to lay his laurel crown at her feet. Military heroes, poets, statesmen, — all find their sweetest praise from the lips that they love; and promotion for gallantry or service means promotion for the beloved also.

CHAPTER X.

A CLAIM ON ITS TRAVELS.

WILLIS'S first great case having been disposed of, and his prospects greatly improved by its happy issue, his professional character becoming established by it as a rising criminal lawyer, a re-action set in. His sensitive, impressionable temperament suffered a kind of collapse, and his mercury fell to the freezing point, while life seemed, for the time, scarcely worth living.

The world is full of such people, — men and women who, under pressure of sufficient motive power, are capable of doing great things; but who, after they are done, sink into the depths of despondency, thinking they never again will be able to make so great an exertion, or so good an impres-

sion. Hope seems to be left out of their composition; and in Will's case, with his brightly tinted hair, his fair skin and sanguine make-up, the melancholy habit was quite inconsistent; but he probably inherited physical traits from one parent, combined with mental ones from another. He looked like his father; but except when under excitement, those who had known both said, "How like his mother he is!" She had a touch of melancholy in her nature, almost "akin to madness," destining her to an early grave; for when she once came into actual contact with life, there being no Hope with beckoning hand to lure her away from present trials to brighter days to come, she sank under them.

Then, too, Willis began to be worried about his father's claim. Once it seemed to never get beyond the United States Treasury officials. Coming out of there, passed upon adversely, it had been referred to a Congressional committee, as special

legislation would have to be had to adjudicate it, the heirs not all being loyal.

From December to March, Will was so often at the Capitol looking after it, that more than one Congressman fought shy of him, thinking him that man of odium, but power, the professional lobbyist. In the minds of some, the word "lobbyist" should be defined, "a wily villain, who seeks to influence legislation through corruption."

What measure, pray tell me, of any importance, ever passed either House without interested parties being on hand to represent their interest, to see that suitable legislation was devised and put into sundry "bills"?

The river and harbor men send representatives to lobby, legitimately, in the interest of commercial waterways; while railway men, wool growers, iron men, men of all trades and occupations, are constantly looking after Congressmen, to see that their interests are "protected" and furthered, whether it be tariff, or only a poor little

claim, not worth more than a hundred thousand of Uncle Sam's greenbacks. True, there have been "Credit Mobiliers," but that was years ago; the world has advanced since then, and our representatives are incorruptible; and corporations, and individuals, have nothing to waste upon them, since they are amenable to pure reason and simple justice.

At any rate, Will never tried to bribe anybody; but he did talk up the merits of his claim, and finally got a bill for its payment through the House and referred to the Senate, when Congress adjourned, just a day before it would have come up for discussion; and that meant failure for this time, it being the end of that session and of the Congress. It would have to come up again as a new bill. Heaven only knows how long that will take.

It almost made him sick. He went home looking discouraged; he seemed to have aged ten years in a few days, so pale and drawn was his countenance. Kate was

shocked to see him in that condition, and really anxious lest a severe illness was coming on, although she was getting somewhat accustomed to his variable moods; but their power to wound was none the less, for he seemed to shun and repel her expressed sympathy, which hurt her more than words. If he had given up his confidence into her keeping, and talked of it freely, she felt it would have been a relief to him, and enabled her to minister to his mental wants.

He would shut himself up in his room, denying her companionship, neither eating nor drinking until the mood passed.

This morbid tendency terrified Kate; yet she hesitated about making her anxieties known to even her parents, who were now both feeble, and but illy prepared to advise or sympathize with her. She felt lonely, and at times as though it was almost more than she could bear; for all the anxieties of the family life seemed to fall upon her, Willis taking no interest in affairs at home, even forgetting, or neglecting, to keep her

supplied regularly with the necessary funds for housekeeping, at times.

The trials of a refined woman under such circumstances are easier imagined than described. They may promote womanliness and self-reliance, but, if so, at the expense of something sweet and dear to a woman's heart — her confidence in the husband of her choice; especially when she comes to realize that she can no longer lean upon him as a staff and support, but must take up and carry on her slender shoulders the life burdens of two, as best she may. Perhaps also she is at a loss to know how much to censure or blame him, and doubts if any censure or blame is deserved by one who acts so out of the normal as to make it questionable to a just and sympathetic person whether he ought to be held accountable.

"Oh," thought she, "if he would only quit worrying about that *ignis fatuus*, his claim, and devote himself to business, how happy we might be!"

Will did not consider himself a selfish person, by any means. He was generous to his friends to a fault, but he allowed himself to carry home his bad feelings, and give way to them unrestrainedly there, without considering their effect upon Kate. If she had feelings to be considered in the matter, he made no sign, so long as she did not complain. She bore a burden under her heart that some time would become a living joy; and a burden on her heart that would ere long become a tender memory, for her mother was failing fast.

One morning in February, one of those bright, spring-like days, warm and sunshiny, Kate went into her mother's room, to find that one of God's dear angels had been there before her, and that her mother's sweet spirit had left its worn casket of clay for the heavenly vision.

With a cry she threw herself at the cold feet; the dear old lady had fallen "asleep in Jesus" as she sat in her easy-chair. When her father and Willis came, they

found Kate in a dead faint at the feet of her beloved dead. They bore her to her room, where she remained for a month, coming forth at last crowned with woman's highest office, motherhood, a lovely babe in her arms.

During these dark days, Willis seemed to rouse himself. He was all devotion and attention to his wife, and exceedingly proud and happy to be the father of a son and heir. Her poor old father could not do enough to testify how dear she was to him, especially now that his dear wife had gone home.

Kate began to pluck up a little courage, sad and lonely as she was, now that Willis was once again affectionate and kind, and would let her indulge her womanly weakness — if you will — of leaning on him, being petted and beloved as a good wife, so sweet and constant, should be. Indeed, Will did begin to see that he had been intensely selfish in indulging his moods through so great a time of sorrow and trial as Kate

had borne alone. But he didn't *say so to her*, and therein lay his mistake. The power of appreciative love in a woman's life, a few trifling words to speak, but so fraught with power to heal and bless a woman's heart, — oh, why are they withheld? Are women never quite understood by men of a certain type? God knows! and he knows also just how much censure or blame is due for not making life richer and happier, when it could be done so easily.

"Come, Kate, fix yourself and that 'tiny image of myself' up for a drive. We must go and see auntie and the girls. We have been letting these young women have it pretty much their own way of late. It's time we called them to an account."

How good such a sally sounded in Kate's ears!

"I will be ready by the time you are back with a phaeton."

"All right, madam, see that you are. Put in plenty of wraps, for it is still March, if it is a fine day; and a wind from the

north pole may strike us before we get back."

Coming back soon with the phaeton, Willis helped his wife in, then took that precious package, all muffled up in white, a dainty little thing, as soft as a ball of cotton, as delicate as fine china, and deposited it in Kate's arms; for she meant to carry her baby on its first outing.

Through streets, under swelling buds and floating down from cottonwood trees, they swiftly drove, until they reached the house of auntie and the girls. Luckily, they were all at home, and loud and hearty were the greetings to the little despot in blankets, who lorded it over them, one and all, like a king.

"Willis, we began to think," said Jessie, "that you were never coming to see us again. It is quite time this little manikin returned some of our calls."

"What have you girls been doing all these months, any way?" said Kate to Georgia. "We have had so many things

happening that we have hardly had time to think of you."

Just then Jessie left the room on some errand. Kate resumed, "It seems to me that Jess looks thin and pale. What's the matter with her, Georgia?"

"There's a good deal, but I dare not begin to tell you now. I shall have to run over and spend the day with you soon, for I want you and Will to know. Jessie and Claude have quarrelled about something. I think Will had best interfere — he is her natural protector — and if Claude is to blame, hold him accountable. You know Jess is just as set in her ways as she can be. — She's coming! — I will drop in to-morrow, and tell you all about it. Not a word to her of how she looks, unless you want to lose your head. She is cross enough to bite."

"It is hard, Georgia, when people have to bear any kind of a pull on their feelings in silence. You may be thankful you are not in love."

"What, so soon! You talking cynicism?"

"Not exactly; only love does not always lead one over a bed of crushed rose-leaves. Life is complex, and that every rose has a thorn is as true in reality as in poetry."

"Aunt, when are we to have a day's visit from you?"

"Can't say, my dear. These girls have a dressmaker coming soon, with house-cleaning following that. I will drop in on you for 'lunch' some day, and you must be content with small favors."

"O Kate," exclaimed Georgia, "I have just finished a picture which I wish you would look at with your critical eye."

"I am willing to look at it; but as for the qualifications you are pleased to attribute to my eyes, that is another thing. Where's your picture?"

"Up in my studio. You didn't know I had set up for a real artist, did you? I have a studio in the mansard, with a north window. I tell you it is grand. Come on!

I will lead the way. You can trust that precious child for a few moments to auntie's tender mercies. You come, too, Will."

How does a bright young girl get up a studio? Is it like a man's? Not a bit of it! A woman's refinement of taste in the whole of her surroundings has the mark of femininity written over it, in its superior cleanliness and order, — two things of divine origin that do not belong to the average male, with a sense of color superior to any save that of the most excellent artistic genius.

Now that is not claiming too much for the artistic temperament *feminine;* it is only portraying what belongs of inheritance to the average woman, — superiority in cleanliness, order, and a sense of color. In Georgia it amounted to genius: for her orderliness was not stiff, her cleanliness not fussy, nor her sense of color purely conventional. She possessed the power to so use these practical qualities, — for she was

ideally practical in all things, — as to get the most out of them. She made a study of the real things in life, and with a deft hand brought out, or wrought in, the ideal, which is the governing element in all lives above the sordid.

The mansard on the little house they lived in was considerable of a sham. It made an imposing front, in a small way; but it was chopped off in the rear, with a backward sloping roof out of which sprung a dormer window facing north, with its two sunny windows on the south front, — a tiny room some fourteen feet square, the hall being cut off on one side, but it answered Georgia's purpose.

Go in. A Persian rug is on the floor, an art square; with some soft window draperies, with a Greek pattern scattered over them. A few quaintly carved, high-backed wooden chairs, picked up at auction; a most luxurious lounge, with square pillows piled high at the back, with ottomans and *tête-à-têtes;* spindle-legged tables

stand about, without any attempt to be anywhere but just in the place they ought to be for convenience and looks; a blue jug, antique vases, a few pictures on the walls, and the easel, give it a very cosey and habitable air; while a great white cat, with a very pink nose, lies curled up in the only luxuriously furnished chair, a "sleepy hollow," big enough to be what its name indicates,— a good place for "a beauty sleep."

A soft cloud of something covered a picture on one of the easels. Georgia advanced, and lifted it. There was a square, flat work-basket filled with soft, half-knit wools, and a few balls of yarn lying loose, with that very identical cat reaching up to the little stand on which the basket stood, helping herself to a ball of yarn. She had such a cunning, cattish expression, that both Will and Kate exclaimed laughingly, —

"Well, Georgia, you have caught her catship's expression perfectly. She is a beauty, too, for she is not unlike her great

prototype, the panther. Her lines are mostly curves, which are lines of beauty the world over."

"Georgia, I would enter that picture, when you've finished it, at the New York Exhibition, or the Philadelphia Academy, if they would take it."

"Will, I hear a voice downstairs that is 'cooing' in rather a high key," said Kate. "I must away. But Georgia, I think your studio a gem. You will distinguish the family yet."

"Don't know about that, Kate, but I can make a few dollars, and please myself in doing it. I do believe that I love my art so much that I couldn't give it up even to get married. If my lover cannot marry my art, he cannot have me."

"That's good doctrine, dear; no genuine, self-respecting man expects a woman to give up anything that is really a part of herself, these days; and, as your art is part of your life, not even for his lordship himself."

"I don't believe if I were to marry, I would do as most lady pianists do, — quit practising."

"No, I do not believe you would. No one ever does who really loves art. I remember once of being in Philadelphia on a visit, where a married lady who entertained me was an amateur artist. She had a studio in her house, and painted pictures beautiful enough to have made her rich and prosperous, had it been her fortune to need to live by her art; and, with these she embellished her home, and made it lovely."

"Good-by. I will drop in to-morrow," said Georgia.

CHAPTER XI.

CLAUDE AND JESSIE.

CLAUDE was in such a state of mind over his mother's hostility and condition, his father's sympathy and advice, that although he went out to walk, he had no idea of seeking Jessie until he had calmly deliberated upon what course to pursue.

Not caring much where he went, by the force of habit, he moved out toward Franklin Square, where on arriving he sat him down on his accustomed seat by the fountain, thinking thoughts very different from those that had hitherto hallowed that spot with tender associations.

He scarcely knew how long he had been there, when a well-known voice said, —

"You here? I did not expect to see you to-day."

Claude turned his face toward Jessie with a flash of pleasure in his handsome eyes, but she, with a woman's intuitive perception, saw that something was weighing upon his mind.

Thrown off his guard by her unexpected appearance, he said, "Yes, dear, I am here; but I own my visit was the result of accident rather than design. I had been thinking deeply, and, as the boy said of his whistling, 'it did itself.' I came as a matter of course."

"What is the matter, Claude?" said Jessie, seating herself beside him.

"My mother was taken very ill to-day, and I've just run away to think."

"Had you, Claude, anything to do with her illness? You say you ran away 'to think.' I have a feeling that something unpleasant has occurred between you and your mother about *us*. Is that so, Claude? Do not try to deceive me. Let me know the worst she has to say;" for, as Jessie went on, she read in Claude's darkening

face, that she was undoubtedly the subject of his thoughts: while with him, here was another revelation of womanhood. This woman, through her instinct of love and devotion, was reading him like a clairvoyant; he not knowing that love is not only seer, but prophet in one.

For a few moments he sat silent, his father's advice running through his mind. He could not deny, nor would he confess, so he tried evasion, that most dangerous condition between lovers.

"My dear, I am not at liberty at present to say what caused my mother's illness, but of this one thing you can rest assured; so strongly are my affections fixed upon you, that no opposition, if there ever should be any from my family, could alienate me from you. I am yours faithfully, Jessie, as I believe you are mine."

Jessie looked disturbed. She knew he was not exactly speaking the truth. He was evading it, temporizing; not trusting her fully with the details, whatever they

might be, and she didn't like it, — these half confidences, though accompanied by protestations of undying loyalty.

"Claude, I did not think you would try to deceive me. I just know that something unpleasant about our relations has occurred in your family. I feel it; and you know, if they are too lofty for me, I am still as proud as they, and release you, especially since I see how unhappy it makes you."

"O Jess, how little you understand me or the situation! You must trust me. Believe me, I would explain if I could. I can't just yet; and, as for being flung over in that way, simply because you are vexed with me, I guess not! I will not *be* released."

"I never promised you, Claude, in words, that I would be yours until — I said, you remember — your family were willing to receive me *as one of themselves, every way their equal!*"

"I do remember, Jessie; and you are

their equal, both for yourself first, and as coming from good old Virginia stock, — just as good as mother's Pilgrim ancestry, only they do not know you, darling, as I do; they have prejudices, if you so consider them. I want to take you to the Capitol soon, and introduce you to my governor. He is first-rate, and I am just sure he will like you, and be willing to receive you on your merits."

"Why, Claude, you do not suppose I am going to condescend to go to the Capitol to be introduced to even your father, do you? My aunt is a charming hostess, and if the honorable senator, who happens to be your father, wishes to make my acquaintance, he must call on us, as is usual in such cases."

"Jess, you are prouder and more spirited than any one would take you to be from your mild, gray-blue eyes, your cool-tinted skin, and quiet manner," said he.

"Claude, I am none too proud or spirited, either. Your people shall respect me, or I will have none of them."

"All right, dearest and best of girls. Now let us walk a few blocks, for I must soon return to the house and look after poor mamma. You are not so very angry with me, are you, dear?"

"I don't know whether I am or not; nor shall I, until I think it over by myself. Your very presence confuses my judgment, and I have a feeling that you have 'carried the day,' whether I would or not."

"I only hope I have," remarked Claude.

A few blocks farther on they separated; and for several days Jessie neither saw nor heard anything from Claude, which at first seemed strange, then queer, then inexplicable. Then she cried, and finally came to the conclusion that Claude had taken her, on reflection, at her word, — considered himself discarded; for there was no reason, that she could see, why he should not write, if his mother was too ill for him to be out. Still, as there was nothing in the papers about Mrs. Senator Warner's illness, it was all very strange, very trying; and Jess,

being no angel, only a very sweet and loving, sensitive girl, grew paler than usual, and, as Georgia said, "cross enough to bite."

To go back a little. Mrs. Warner's illness disappeared almost as suddenly as it came. She recovered her usual self-contained and placid demeanor, outwardly proud and calm, but with a manner that generally commanded attention, in her household or elsewhere.

She had a maid to whom she was much attached, and who returned the feeling with that personal, flattering devotion that characterizes the Irish heart. She was a blue-eyed girl, with raven hair, from "ould Ireland," who had been selected by Mrs. Warner, first, because she was so attractive, and then kept because she was docile and capable, devoted to her mistress's interests, knowing her place, yet sufficiently well-bred to spend many hours in her society when that lady was not otherwise engaged.

She crocheted beautifully, darned laces, and deftly mended elegant trifles, too costly to be thrown away, making herself pleasantly useful; while her native wit, dropping from a tongue brogue-tipped, made her always interesting to have about. She came to share many of her mistress's thoughts, and to some degree her sentiments, being no gossip, since she had been an inmate of the senatorial household some ten years; always going wherever they went in the way of trips, or to Washington for the winters.

Nothing had as yet been said to Bridget in regard to her mistress's illness, but this silence was about to be broken.

Mrs. Warner was sitting up, looking very interesting as an invalid, in a soft cashmere *négligé*, and a delicate cap on her head, a few days later than the scenes recorded of her illness.

"Bridget, I wish when the postman comes, if Claude or Mr. Warner are not in, that you would bring all the mail to me."

"Indade, dear lady, the mail mon has just gone; fo' only a momint agoo, I herrd the bill ring."

"Well, then, go down and bring the mail up here."

Presently Bridget returned with several letters for the senator, two or three for Mrs. Warner, and one for Claude, — a dropped letter in the delicate chirography of a woman's hand.

Other mothers, besides those of Celtic origin, never quite get over the idea that even grown-up sons have not ceased to be children, and are subject to that espionage of a mild, motherly sort, that spies only for the good of the subject.

Mrs. Warner was, as said before, an imperious dame, fond of having her own way; and she coolly opened a secretary drawer, — or rather told Bridget to, — deposited Jessie's missive — a mixture of tenderness and reproaches — in that receptacle; her sense of delicacy and honor not allowing her to act the part of spy farther than

to *detain*, but not violate the confidences under seal.

"Bridget, if Claude should ask you if any letters came to-day for him, just refer him to me by saying you gave me the mail."

"Yes, mum."

Claude never asked, and that little *billet doux* lay undisturbed in its hiding-place for three or more months.

In the mean time destiny had played tricks with Claude's note to Jessie. The postage-stamp did not "stick," and, after the usual routine, came back to him through the dead-letter office in the course of six weeks. He and Jessie were just as unhappy, as widely estranged, and misunderstood each other as much, as though it had all occurred purposely, instead of being the result of circumstances.

Consequently, Claude and Jessie passed on the street with the coldest and most formal of bows; and then Claude took an early opportunity to go out with a scientific

expedition from the Smithsonian, to the National Park on the Yellowstone, which kept him away all summer; while Jessie spent her vacation mostly, as Georgia said, "dumping round," and could not be persuaded to go anywhere farther away than on an excursion to Glymont or Mount Vernon. She loved the water, and a day's sail down and up the beautiful and lordly Potomac acted as a balm on her wounded spirit.

Those proud, self-sustained people suffer a great deal more than the impassioned ones who talk and cry it out, getting sympathy, pity, and petting from almost every one; and Jessie was one of the unfortunate few who suffer from a hurt like this misunderstanding, as others do from a physical blow.

She never would have believed it possible for Claude to act so strangely, so cruelly, unless she had been made to experience it. And, as for Claude's suspecting that his mother would carry her opposition to

his freedom of choice to the extent of detaining his letters, nothing short of actual knowledge could make him even think of such a thing as among the possibilities.

Ah, these cunning little threads of life, woven from contact with complex and conflicting natures! They weave many a pattern never contemplated by those who design, and the weavers who draught them.

Under all outward currents run deep channels, cutting, — cutting their way to oceans of experiences, where the sailors are shipwrecked, cast away, drowned, with only here and there one saved as by a miracle.

CHAPTER XII.

CLAUDE AN EXPLORER.

IN company with a score of companions, each of whom was a specialist in his way, to all appearances Claude did not find himself so very unhappy or sore-hearted as he was on leaving Washington. Unless a man loses his head entirely and becomes insane, love seldom works any other mischief than to mellow some and make cynics of others.

Claude was too healthy and sanguine to be either; therefore he entered into the life of an explorer with the enthusiasm of an amateur bent upon having a good time and learning something. He had no doubt but that he would find his heart all right upon his return.

He never could forget such a girl as

Jessie, but she seemed to have slipped out of his life without any appreciable reason; too proud, he thought, to accept destiny even linked with his, which did not come up to the standard of her deserts.

Claude entered into all the schemes of the professor; acted as his amanuensis, and climbed up cañons, clambered over rocks, chipped specimens, and took observations of the grandeur of our Western scenery, which must be seen to be fully appreciated. He enjoyed roughing it, sleeping under a tent of pine boughs or the stars, as fate decreed; he enjoyed the brilliancy of the rocks which "rivalled the flowers of the field in variety of delicate or gorgeous shades of coloring."

He became an ornithologist; a hunter of the cinnamon bear or the buffalo, as on their expedition they encountered these rovers of plain or mountain. Soon Claude's appetite was something prodigious. He could eat anything; and his form became strong, his fair skin a tawny brown. He enjoyed

every moment of the day, but when the tents were pitched for the night, the camp-fires glowing after the rude evening meal, he and the professor seemed to be more inclined to be "chummy" than their companions, who soon disposed of themselves, each man in his own way for the night; while Claude and the middle-aged professor would sit and chat about the world in general, and especially that part of it left at home.

Now the professor was one of Nature's own sons. He was simple and natural as a little child, as men of great minds are apt to be; and while he acknowledged Nature as his mother, whose secrets of creation and life he longed to solve, at home he had a wife whom he loved with the singleness of heart which sometimes characterizes such as he. She had accompanied him on many of his former expeditions, but on this one she could not, as she was now a mother, and her baby girl absorbed the wife in her matronly duties.

But the professor missed her intelligent companionship, her wifely care; the joys of a domestic atmosphere after a day's hard climb among the mountains. Into Claude's not unwilling ear the good man poured out all his sentimental woes, for the young man's touched affections disposed him to be interested in this display of conjugal affection. His home experiences held nothing like it between his parents, each of whom moved in a different orbit. Here was a union existing, so far as the professor was concerned, between two beings, one of whom was rugged and "bearded like the pard," but with a heart ideally loyal and tender to one who he averred was the loveliest and gentlest of her sex; while the photograph he always wore over his heart sustained the assertion.

Now all this was good for Claude. Somehow, in this isolated life, he had drifted into an intimacy with the professor which resulted in many confidential asides; and the professor had been told enough to

enable him to guess the rest of the love affair between Claude and Jessie. Besides, he knew Jessie. His idolized little girl had been in Miss Peyton's kindergarten; and he told Claude he "considered her one of the finest specimens of young womanhood he had ever seen," in response to which sentiment that young man heartily agreed.

They were lying close together one night on pine boughs, with the rough hunter's blankets thrown over them; their feet resting in front of the dying embers of the camp-fire, with the deep blue sky over them, the yellow stars looking like lamps above them, when the professor said, —

"Claude, I am pretty sure that you will be able to solve the reason why about Jessie some day. Somebody has, it is my impression, put an obstacle between you which she sees, but you do not."

"It is her pride simply, I think," said Claude. "She imagines — not wide of the mark either — that my mother opposes my

wishes, and she says she will have none of me until they at home are willing to receive her as one of themselves."

"Well, I must say I like her for that," responded the professor. "Most girls would be so glad to get you, you handsome dog, that they would not care a button for the old folks' opinion. Jessie evidently has self-respect, and is not that kind of a girl; but if you have been fortunate enough to win her proud and cold affections, you need not worry. She will be yours some day, if you are faithful."

"I never expect to love another woman as I have and could love Jessie, if she would let me; but I confess the future doesn't look very promising so far as she is concerned. I joined this expedition, hoping, determining to forget her; and here are you, a sentimental old scientist, doing all in your power to make me remember her."

"A good woman like her can't be forgotten, you will find; and I am mistaken

in you, if you really want to forget her. You ran away because you couldn't bear to meet her, and see her cold, sad face, as I have, and wondered what it meant. If you do not find a way to win her, I shall cut you just as soon as we return to the land of civilization."

"All right, old chap! I suppose our friendship is doomed then; for fate separated us, and if she is not kind enough to reunite us, we shall always suffer for her meddling."

The professor, somehow, lost his grip on the confidential thread of discourse, for a most sonorous snore emanated from his side of the couch, hearing which Claude turned on his side; and soon the air was vocal with the sniffs, snorts, and rattles which scientists, as well as other masculine sleepers, utter in the silent watches of the night.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE OLD PROFESSOR TURNS MATCH-MAKER.

THEY did not keep Sunday very religiously in camp. "Dryasdust," of the government expedition out in the Bad Lands of the far West, and Professor Quartz let the men do pretty much as they pleased on that day; he and his working-staff writing up the journal of the week's work, letters home, or reading up in the library they had with them, the Bible, Shakespeare, and Nicholas Nickleby; the first seldom used unless some one died, and had to be buried, while Nickleby was so much read but little was left of it, and Shakespeare was looking shabby from much use and the wear and tear of hard travel.

On this particular Sunday, the professor sent his most loquacious companion off on

a hunt, to get rid of him; for that nook in his mind not devoted to science had a scheme in it to execute which he must get Claude out of the way.

The professor didn't look like it any more than thousands of other people in this world who have a rough exterior and a refined interior, but he was capable of a great deal of sentimental feeling, both directly and sympathetically. He had had a love experience in his youth that had terminated happily, thanks to the skilful interference of a friend; and Claude's somewhat sad eyes, and a certain look at times, actually transformed the geologist for the nonce into a sentimentalist.

The camp was situated in a rocky and half-barren region, where cañons divided up the otherwise flat earth into abysses where the depths were so great they made one dizzy to look down. They were partly sheltered by a beetling brow of stone, jutting out from half way up in the cañon's mouth. Just above them was a belt of ever-

greens, and the lair of occasional beasts not desirable to meet unprepared.

The professor had pretended great interest in securing a cinnamon-bear skin, and Claude, with a party of men, had gone on a hunt, while the man of science proceeded to get out his writing materials; and at a stone desk of nature's manufacture, he indited the following epistle: —

My dear Wife Maude, — As usual, I am about to give up an hour or two to chronicling the experiences of the past week. But here let me say for your future edification, madam, this is my last trip without you. Even one woman's presence can enliven and relieve the monotony of a poor devil's existence in this wilderness of rocks and hills that were cut out by the torrents which sawed down through them, forming cañons and divides thousands of feet deep.

We have done nothing but climb and carry burdens the past week, for the river was too turbulent and swift for our boats, and we have hardly made a hundred miles of progress, but we have picked up a lot of scientific facts and observations for future reference. We are well, and as we are almost out of this cañon, we hope to have easier

travelling the coming week; but it is very lonely, — not a letter, or paper, or bit of news now this six weeks. We are utterly ignorant of all that is going on in the world, or how it is with you and our darling child. I tell you, Maud, I sometimes think you must either be different from other women, or the best woman in the world, not to cry out against these long separations, — my devotion to science; but I am not so heartless a fellow as you might imagine. I long to see you every day, and I am resolved this shall be my last expedition without you. You have proved so many times that you could endure hardship for my sake, that I think you could again, even with our child.

There is one thing you can do for me where you are. You know Mrs. Senator Warner? Well, her son is with us; not exactly one of us, but a manly young fellow, and a mighty good scientist for an amateur. But I am persuaded that we are indebted for the pleasure of his society to the fact, that in his case, "the course of true love" does not "run smooth;" and the young lady, I think, is that pretty girl, sister to Willis Peyton, — Jessie, I believe, is her name. I have not been able to find out just what is the matter, — we fellows are clumsy at such *finesse;* but perhaps you, with your wit and tact, can, and may be able to bring about a better state of affairs: for, if I remember right, our little girl belongs to Miss Peyton's kindergar-

ten, and this is your chance to distinguish yourself as a match-maker, for I would stake my reputation that Claude's life is clean and manly, and he would make such a husband as that young girl might be proud of. My impression of her was, that she carried herself with a great deal of self-respecting dignity, which is a kind of pride. There is too little of genuine love in this world to waste the little there is now and then "on the desert air;" and I am tempted to turn match-maker myself, if you do not find a way to clear up this misery, and bring these two young noodles into pleasanter relations.

Heaven's choicest blessings, with my undying love, be with my darlings.

Yours devotedly,

GEORGE QUARTZ.

P. S. This will be mailed some time this week, as I send a man and scouts back to a Mormon settlement for supplies, when I hope to have news from home, with papers containing that of the world in general. G. Q.

CHAPTER XIV.

AN EXCURSION, AND WHAT CAME OF IT.

IT was a hot summer, but Congress dragged its weary way along through June and July, much to the disgust of the Mrs. Honorables or the Mrs. Senators who felt in duty bound to tarry in Washington or its vicinity for the adjournment, so as to have a wifely care over their hard-worked husbands who sweltered and struggled in political throes in the illy ventilated halls of the Capitol.

Mrs. Senator Warner considered it especially hard on her. She was suffering from a nervousness that would neither let her go nor stay in peace. She took little airings in her carriage out to the charming drives through the grounds adjacent to the Soldiers' Home, and occasionally an excur-

sion on a steamer down the river for a day or a week, as it terminated at Glymont or Fortress Monroe.

It was the last of July, and already by breakfast time a hot day had set in. She ate sparingly, but bade Bridget prepare a lunch-basket, "and we will go to Glymont for the day," said she. "It will surely be cool coming and going; and, being moonlight, if we reach home by nine o'clock, it will be all right."

Bridget knew her mistress's tastes as to luncheons, and she soon had one prepared, and then ran to assist her in preparing for the day's outing. The family carriage took them, with shawls, waterproofs, and umbrellas to protect from a thunder-storm which is very apt to close up such an electrical atmosphere as accompanies the white heats of July weather in Washington, to the wharf at the foot of Seventh Street, where the *Wauwasett* lay, already puffing, ready to start with a full load of humanity arrayed in summer's gauziest

material, so far as the younger portion was concerned. As many as could find accommodations went on the hurricane deck, under the awning, for fresher breezes and finer views. A space was cleared for the young people to dance, and a string band began to play as the boat, with pennon and streamer flying at masthead, steamed slowly out and into the stream.

Mrs. Warner and her maid found a seat near the pilot-house, and she observed, as she sat down, a middle-aged lady in a soft gray dress, with two very pretty young women with her. One was dark and slight, very proud in her carriage. She wore a white wool dress, while her companion, scarcely less beautiful, but of a different type, less haughty in her mien, wore a dark, plain blue gingham trimmed with white embroidery. Both girls had broad-brimmed hats on, and the three seemed sufficient for themselves. Their manners were gentle, high-bred, and so

pleasing, that Mrs. Warner found herself wondering who they could be. Tourists probably, as she had never seen them in society,—or possibly, of those exclusive Washington families, who have all the refinement and breeding which society is supposed to give, without ever being a part of it, having seen better days, "before the war." This last was not so wide of the mark, had she but known who they were, for they were no less than Georgia and Jessie with their aunt; Georgia, that morning, being another unwitting instrument in the hands of fate, when she merely said at breakfast, "Come, Jessie, don't mope. Let's go to Glymont for the day."

Jessie, equally unconscious of what was before her, said, neither anxious nor willing, —only too indolent to get up opposition as she often did,—"Well, I will, if aunt will go too."

"Certainly, girls, you both need a change. I shall enjoy it myself, for we shall swelter if we stay here."

And that is how they happened to be aboard the *Wauwasett.*

A lovely pale blue haze draped the Virginia hills and Maryland shores with a veil of beauty; and the light waters rippled and danced like jewels in a gold and silver trail after the boat, which was swept by the gentlest of southern breezes as she glided past the Arsenal, and the resorts on either shore, with Fort Washington and Mount Vernon sitting so placidly on the heights to the right, until they landed at Glymont, where the happy picnickers found a sylvan retreat, or a pavilion for their spread.

Somehow Mrs. Warner and the girls' aunt found themselves in proximity more than once; and while the girls went roving for flowers, the two ladies, sitting on a green bank overlooking the bathers and the dancing pavilion, drifted into chat, which, while cordial, disclosed nothing of each other's identity. They met conversationally on conventional ground and exchanged many ideas; were mutually favorably impressed;

and when the girls returned, the aunt merely said to her companion, "My nieces," which was introduction enough for a picnic.

"Mrs. Warner," said Bridget on coming up, "would you like to take a sail in the yacht?"

Aunt Martha and the girls exchanged one of those rapid, telegraphic glances, which said, "That is who she is." Jessie haughtily walked away. Mrs. Warner's eyes followed her, and she thought, "I have seldom seen so beautiful a girl anywhere, or a manner so much to be admired."

As the sun went down, the moon rose at its full, and a most delightful summer evening came on, so refreshing after the long, hot day. Jessie could not ignore a presence so ladylike as Mrs. Warner's, and the evening meal was placed upon a single table in a little summer-house, but she was very careful not to address any of her remarks to any one in particular, but let the

delicate shafts of her maidenly wit play promiscuously, since the presence of Claude's mother acted like champagne upon her sensitive nature; and a delicate bloom tinged her cheek, while an unusual sparkle was in her dark-blue eyes.

About half-past seven they picked up their lunch baskets and other "traps," which had not been needed after all, hence were a burden bordering on the order "nuisance," and boarded the *Wauwasett* as she set out for her second trip to Washington.

As the moonlight deepened, the sunset flush having disappeared, a merrier party never rode a wave than was on its homeward way at the close of that day.

Twilight, silvery gray, is as beautiful on old stone Fort Washington and Mount Vernon Heights as on the water; and on they seemed to glide, everybody happy and free from care, when "Fire! fire! fire!" broke on the startled ear like a word of doom, and in an instant the flames shot up

a wall of lurid hue around the pilot-house, literally cutting the front and aft asunder.

The ladies were in a group at the extreme end of the boat, with the guard only between them and the water. The pilot headed the boat for the shore, but — Great Heavens! What a scene! Men, women, and children of families divided by a wall of flame; cries of alarm, prayers, imprecations, and the captain directing at one end of the boat only; the life-preservers all stored in the space round the pilot-house where the flames burst out from the engine-room, and the life-boat unmanageable, they were soon enveloped in flames.

What a moment of horror! Who can depict it? Georgia and Jessie could swim, thanks to a natatorium training, but Aunt Frank and Mrs. Warner and her maid could not.

Jessie's presence of mind and calmness never forsook her for a moment. She and Georgia fell into Aunt Frank's arms for what she felt might be a last embrace.

"Take a stool with you and jump over the guard," said Jessie embracing her. "We will try to save you. The boat is swinging round. It will soon be in shallow water. Keep your mouth closed tight while in the water."

So saying, she turned to Claude's mother: "You are *his* mother. I will save you, if possible, for his sake. Jump quick." So saying, she fairly forced the two elder women over the rail and into the water, for the flames scorched and licked toward them like a hungry fiend.

They went over with a splash, and she and Georgia followed. Aunt Frank had a cool head in emergencies also. She clung to her stool and soon came up with her arms across it, her head above water, but floating landward.

Not so Mrs. Warner. Unaccustomed to face stern experiences, she went down, expecting it to be her last of earth, with a cry to make one's blood curdle; but other cries as distressful were heard all around,

while men, women, and children struggled bravely or selfishly, as their natures were, for life and the shore.

Jessie's feet soon touched bottom, although the water was up to her chin; but she had confidence, and, as she saw Georgia grasp Aunt Frank's stool, she looked around for Mrs. Warner, who soon emerged, for she had literally gone to the bottom as she, screaming, plunged in. Jessie grasped her by the arm and encouraged her by word to keep her head up and float, which with a little help she soon did, and in five minutes came ashore more dead than alive. Bridget was saved by her instinct, rather than any aid she had from others, for, on finding herself in water that buoyed her up, she stopped struggling, and the in-coming tide bore her ashore.

Mrs. Warner was very much prostrated; so much so, that for a while it seemed as though she might die from nervous exhaustion after all danger was past; but wet and uncomfortable as they were, the three

ladies chafed her hands and strove in every way to restore animation and reviving life.

In just twenty minutes from the alarm of fire, the *Wauwasett* burned to the water's edge, and her hull went ashore, and down in a few feet of water with a hissing thud, her freight scattered on the Virginia beaches, a few miles below Alexandria, while many were still struggling in the water, and the dead or dying drifting in to add to the horrors of the situation. Presently a large Norfolk steamer came around a bend of the river. Yawls were sent out, and the survivors rescued and on their way to the city, carrying a tale of horror and disaster as fearful as ever occurred on Potomac's placid waters.

Only an hour behind time, but what an eventful hour! Who carries ill news that it flies so fast? There seemed no way visible; but a mass of surging, excited people blocked the wharf, and demanded to know if their beloved were dead or surviving.

Senator Warner was there also; and he and his man carried Mrs. Warner, still but half conscious, to the carriage and home, where in her bed she soon recovered her reason, but the very fires of hell seemed consuming her soul. She could hardly wait for daylight that she might send for the brave girl who saved her life for Claude's sake, to confess to her what a bad mother she had been.

The old senator listened to her self-accusations with mingled emotions. He was glad she was saved; glad that brave, sweet girl was the rescuer; glad for Claude's sake; but even he would not have suspected his somewhat imperious wife of having detained a letter of Claude's. Why, Claude was twenty-four years old now, and the old lady would have a sweet time settling with that young man!

However, he was perfectly willing to go after Jessie just as soon after daylight as possible.

CHAPTER XV.

CLAUDE IN PERIL.

THE dew was hardly off the sage brush when Claude and his companions left camp on their bear hunt.

They were armed with rifles and knives, for sometimes bruin comes perilously close, and if the hunter is unprepared, he might be squeezed to death, or felled with a softly padded foot, one blow from which means death.

Having seen a cinnamon bear prowling among the rocks more than once, they, as a party of peaceable geologists and engineers, had no special desire to cultivate his acquaintance further, until the Professor suddenly seemed to have a great longing to possess the skin of a cinnamon bear, and then several of the party became quite en-

thusiastic over the idea. When they set forth, the strongest-limbed and best shots among the explorers expressed a determination to be the hunters, promising to return by night with bags full of bear steaks and the coveted fur-covered hide, for the beloved Professor.

Claude thought he had endured as much in every way of hardship and peril as the best and hardiest of them all. Indeed, he had, and proved himself over and over every inch a man in physique, as in breadth of mind. There was an almost romantic attachment between the Professor and his fellow scientists, which extended to the bearers of burdens, cooks, drivers, and Indian guides employed to pilot them through these unknown wonders of creation so far as white men of the present times are concerned, although cliff houses, mounds, and interesting "remains" still speak of a generation unknown to historic times.

They crept cautiously up the steep sides

of the cañon, along ledges and shelving rocks, peering into every opening or cave to see if their prey was not concealed there.

They pressed on, up perilous heights, where one look below made them dizzy, on, until they came to a wider open space, where a belt of scraggy evergreens grew gnarled and distorted, apparently clutching and clinging to the rocky surfaces by long and straggling roots. They had no power there to grow up tall, but attained only the heights of "brush," thick set, the home of the animals that infested that region.

They had not gone far in this track, before they found spaces partly broken down as though some animal had but recently passed through it. They carried their arms cautiously, each leaving one hand free so as to grapple with the bushes or the foe as might be.

Presently they heard a growl, and a crash. They could not see from whence, but they knew that they were either close to bruin's lair or overtaking him out for a walk.

"Look out!" cried Claude, who was ahead, for he sighted two fiery eyes, and a big, open red mouth just ahead of him, as the bear came leaping on.

It was all so quick that there was no room to turn either back or aside. Claude and Max, the most powerful men of the squad, being in front, were at close quarters with the foe. The men behind went crashing each way to a place of safety, but these two had nothing to do but to fire and whip out their knives ready for action.

Bruin bellowed with rage and pain, and with one or two leaps was upon the men; a creature looking as though he would weigh a thousand pounds — one of the largest and fiercest of the species.

Max made a thrust with his knife as he came on, but in so doing, bruin swerved to one side and made a lunge for Claude, whom he hit on the shoulder, tearing his clothes to shreds, and sending him over backward into the brush which gave way under him, and he seemed destined to go

over the abyss into the cañon's depths below. Luckily for him, he fell only a few feet, when he brought up against a ledge that overhung the awful gulf.

The other fellows rallied quickly to Max's assistance, and with ball and knife, they soon despatched their foe, when they went to the rescue of Claude, whose prostrated form filled them with terror.

They found him only stunned, and his lacerated shoulder was not so badly wounded but that a few days would heal the torn flesh. The explorer who adds to his scientific lore the accomplishment of being able to repair torn clothes, would soon patch them up quite well enough for those who did not hesitate to sacrifice a garment any day for the good of the expedition, such as "making ropes of drawers," when a comrade was in peril, hanging by one hand to a cliff, many feet above the surging waters, as Max did once for the professor.

They picked Claude up, skinned the

bear, cut up all the meat they could carry, and made ready to return to camp. Claude was quite chagrined to think that the bear came so near killing him, instead of his being able to carry off the honors of the hunt as he had hoped to; but since it was Max whose prowess did it, he swallowed his mortification and congratulated him heartily.

Just about dark they reached camp, where Billy, the cook, had a caldron of steaming coffee bubbling fragrantly over the camp fire, which somehow looked more cheerful than ever before to Claude.

The professor, seeing them afar off, went forth to meet them, and, on seeing Claude's piteous plight, he almost repented having so nearly put an end to the young fellow's life whose fate he had mixed himself up with, as though to tempt Providence.

However, all were glad that Claude escaped with his life; and the momentous letter was in the mail-sack ready for to-morrow's journey eastward.

The professor eased his conscience by being as devoted and attentive to Claude's every need as though he were the head of the expedition, and the professor its lowest servant, especially delegated to wait upon that auburn-haired young man.

The bear steak was good after the long diet of salted meat; and the cinnamon skin, drying and curing itself in the peculiar air of the mountains, looked very nice, in an atmosphere where meat hung up out of doors keeps sweet and good for months without curing with salt or smoke.

The next day the messenger and scouts were sent back to the Mormon settlement for supplies, and the explorers took up the regulation duties of climbing, boating, or getting through a cañon as they could, with no unusual incidents occurring.

Claude was disabled, but his flesh soon healed in that favorable atmosphere, and he was quite convalescent at the end of the week. While inactive, he had mastered a good bit of ornithological lore, before

unattainable for want of leisure to pursue it; so does compensation follow even our afflictions in this world. Disaster affords us the coveted leisure to do a certain thing before unattainable.

Some ten days after, the messenger returned from the settlement with supplies, welcome letters, and the papers. Claude received a half dozen despatches, saying, "Return immediately, important. You will find letters at Salt Lake explaining."

Well, this was a dilemma, and they three or four days' journey from a settlement, with nothing but a trail to follow.

Claude could not imagine what had happened, for if it had been death, why not say so? He sat on a rock and thought until unavailing thought made him dizzy. He mechanically opened the package of papers from Washington, some of them nearly two weeks old. He thought he had best begin as near where he left off as possible, so he ran through July, with its everlasting congressional reports that to

him amounted to nothing; into August, reported "awful hot," accounts of excursions, and on until he came to the "*Burning of the 'Wauwasett.' Thrilling Descriptions of the Scene as told by the Passengers. Senator Warner's Wife saved from Drowning by a Beautiful Young Girl. Jessie Peyton the Heroine of the Hour.*"

Claude plunged in and read the whole story, his blood beating faster and faster with excitement, dismay, pleasure, delight, and finally rapture. Jumping up, he ran to the professor and cried, "Hold on, old boy, let me embrace you! Such a batch of news!" And, boy-like, he poured forth the whole batch, beginning with the telegrams and ending with the rescue. "Old chap, I'm off to-morrow morn, early! Do you hear that? With a guide, if I can have one; if not, without. Nothing in this rocky country could hold me now!"

"Well," replied the astonished professor, "it is all coming right without my meddling."

"What do you mean?" said Claude.

They sat down together, and the professor confessed how he had designedly sent him off on a bear-hunt that he might play Divine Providence for him.

"Don't you know, professor, that little as I have seen of life, I have seen this — that plan and plot as we may in regard to any human life, our own not excepted, there is a power underlying, beyond our control, that shapes it in another mould than the one we designed."

"Yes, I've noticed that, too; but it is not a scientific view, however. We educate our young people to believe that they can be whatever they aim to be. The truth is, that there are not places enough to go round, if one aims for places. The only aim to plan for is a high manhood, to put life to such uses as occasions call for. I congratulate you, and you shall start for home and happiness with Blue Feather for a guide. He will carry you through safely, and I can send another message to my

sweetheart by your pony express." So saying, they turned in for the night.

Claude was not usually an early riser, but he found no difficulty at all in getting up at five sharp on the morning of September twenty-first, and lost no time in getting ready to start with Blue Feather for his homeward journey.

The professor could hardly keep from shedding tears when he parted with Claude, for he had learned to love him like a younger brother. *Camaraderie* in the wilds of the West is a very different thing from the social feeling that grows up under the rules and regulations of conventionality.

CHAPTER XVI.

CLAUDE'S MOTHER AND JESSIE.

BEING young, Jessie had somewhat suddenly revived after the fatigue and excitement of the preceding day. She, with Georgia and Aunt Frank, were seated at the breakfast-table with moderately good appetites, when Senator Warner was announced, and asked for "Miss Jessie."

Jessie, like other young people, had some illusions, in regard to people older than herself outliving their emotions, that were destined to receive a shock.

When she passed into the little sitting-room where Senator Warner awaited her, she met for the first time in her life a gray-haired man evidently under the sway of some powerful emotion. With a woman's swift intuition she felt it, and she saw

its reflection in the honest, speaking face. He came forward, and, impetuously taking her into his arms, said, "My dear young girl, you are not unknown to me. My son Claude has told me all about you, and your relations to him; and while you have sent that graceless youth, to whom I have the honor to be father, roaming at large over the wild West, you have won my everlasting gratitude by saving my wife's life yesterday, when she fled from a fiery death to what would have been, but for you, a watery grave."

He could not speak further for a moment, but mastering his rising emotion, proceeded: "My child, Claude's *mother* has sent for you. She is too ill to come to you, but she has something to say. Will you not swallow your pride and go with me now? The carriage is at the door." So saying, he kissed her on the forehead with reverent tenderness, and released her.

Jessie was not resentful, and under her manner of snow, fires of feeling surged

with lava heats. She involuntarily felt that she loved and honored Claude's father for his manliness and tenderness. Coming back to the dining-room she soon told them the purport of the old gentleman's visit.

"Yes, go, Jessie," said Aunt Frank. "There is no doubt about your equality *now*. The obligation is on *their* side, and you have won their gratitude, respect, and undying affection."

During the short ride, Jessie's emotions were of too mixed a nature to allow her to speak save in monosyllables, but the old senator proceeded to tell all he knew of Claude's latest movements, as though they were the one thing that might be most interesting to his companion. Pretty good guessing it was, too, for Jessie's proud heart was just as hungry for news of the one she loved best, in spite of his waywardness, as it could well be.

On arriving at the house, Senator Warner took his companion into his wife's wait-

ing-room, while he went up to prepare her.

"Well, my dear, I have succeeded in bringing your rescuer to the house. Shall I bring her in?"

"Yes, and leave us alone — I must see her alone!"

Going out he brought Jessie in, leading her by the hand, saying, "Wife, this young lady is our son Claude's dearest friend. I hope you will deal gently with her."

Jessie blushed, and going across the room, sank on her knees beside the bed where Claude's mother lay, shorn of her strength and self-abased.

"My dear girl, look up! It is not you who should hide your face, but I, his mother, who treated you both so shamefully." Putting her hand under her pillow she drew forth Jessie's unopened letter, three months old.

"See what a mother is capable of, and despise me if you will, but forgive me if you can! I am sorry enough, now that I

have seen you, and know how noble you are. Of course I have caused you and Claude a deal of anguish, which cannot be atoned for; but I *can* ask your forgiveness, and hope we shall be friends in the future."

"O, don't blame yourself. You did not know me, and I ought to have done for any one what I did for you. Still, I am glad it *was* you!"

So saying, one of Jessie's dazzling smiles broke over her face, and she sank down upon the older woman's breast with a little sob, and was clasped close and warm to a mother's heart.

"I hope you will forgive Claude, my dear, for his mother's sins. He, no doubt, never dreamed I could be so cruel or mean as to withhold a letter, and he will be penitentially sorry for his unkindness to you. Say you forgive us both, my daughter."

"There is nothing to forgive," said Jessie, magnanimously. "We were all victims of circumstances."

"Except myself. I was victim to an

imperious will, backed up by my *bête noir* — a bad temper."

Just then Bridget was heard coming, and Jessie sprang up and sat down in a low chair beside the bed, feeling very near to tears, but very happy and much at home, considering how recently she had come into that house.

Somehow Claude's mother looked less haughty and imperious lying weak and helpless on her bed. The outlines of her face were softened; and her pretty, plump hands with flashing jewels on her taper fingers, lying outside the bed-clothes, added another womanly grace to her appearance; and, ridiculous as it seems, under such touching circumstances, Jessie wondered if she had as small and pretty feet as she had hands.

Bridget brought in breakfast for two, a daintily served meal, which Jessie helped to eat with returning appetite, for the senator's early visit had cut her first breakfast short.

Impulsive people are often transformed, instantaneously, from good haters to lovers, and *vice versa*. Mrs. Senator Warner took such a fancy to Jessie, that she importuned her to prolong her visit; made her promise to come every day until she was well; and in various ways displayed her delight and fondness for Claude's friend, in a way that would have delighted that young man.

In the mean time, the senator was telegraphing hither and yon, trying to trace and reach Claude; but for some reason unexplainable, was unable to communicate with him or the expedition, or even locate it.

The senator was not a man to go half-hearted into anything. He literally took possession of Aunt Frank and Georgia also. When Mrs. Warner was able to ride out, he carried her first to that household to pay her respects; for he had no doubt that Claude would speedily take advantage of all this good feeling to storm the heart of Jessie, and take all its fortifications, when

he once did get an inkling of how matters stood at home; nor would he stand on the manner of his coming, once a telegram reached him. Claude would hurry home as fast as steam could bring him, or he was no "chip of the old block." And then he rested his case, treating the two ladies with that consideration which was befitting the relatives of Claude's *fiancée*.

CHAPTER XVII.

A LITTLE RESPITE.

AUNT FRANK had lived long enough to be considerable of a diplomate. With her experienced eye she soon began to realize that Jessie was suffering from being in somewhat of a false position.

Senator Warner's family treated her almost like a daughter, and tacitly accepted her as Claude's affianced; and yet Jessie was not personally reconciled to that young man, nor had she heard from him or he from her. It is always more or less embarrassing to the newly engaged to recognize their position openly; and here was a complicated case, that outsiders were not supposed to know anything about, and yet had to be recognized somehow.

Aunt Frank lay awake one night think-

ing it out. She would take the initiative, and carry the girls away to some quiet place out of town, for a few weeks change, until the time Claude might have returned or been heard from, and in this way Jessie would have opportunity to recover her self-esteem, which just now seemed to be in a collapsed condition.

"Girls," said that schemer, a few days later, "do you know what we are going to do next?"

"No, aunt," spoke up Jessie. "I wish you would tell us. I would welcome *any* change for awhile."

"So would I," said Georgia. "Even a lover!" with a malicious twinkle in her eye, making a mouth at Jessie.

"Oh, you hush, and let aunt talk. I know she has something on her mind. She looks dreadfully conscious."

"I have, my dears, — I might as well confess it. We are all poked to death here, and have seen quite enough of Washington for one summer. We thought we

could stand it through, but it seems to me it is unusually hot this season, and I tell you what we will do. This evening we will take the Norfolk boat and go down to Fortress Monroe for a week. If we like it, we will remain as much longer as we desire. If we don't, we can come back at the end of that time. I think we would enjoy that quiet town for a few days, with the bathing, crabbing, and other sea-side pleasures."

"So we should, aunt, but it is not so very quiet. The Washington Continentals are camped somewhere in that vicinity, beside the officers stationed there."

"All the better, then. There will be dancing at the hotel in the evening, and we shall have picturesque partners, — for young men in blue trousers and cream white coats are very agreeable to look at, especially as we know something about so many of them. It is just the place you girls have been sighing for, I am sure."

"Yes, but, aunt, I promised the Warners I would ride with them this evening."

"You can go there this morning and excuse yourself by saying, I, unknown to you, had made arrangements to spend a week at Fortress Monroe. I am quite jealous of the senator's attentions to you. I do not think it looks well in so elderly a gentleman, and for Mrs. Warner's sake, I am going to carry you away," said Aunt Frank teasingly.

"I am willing to be carried," said Jessie, as she skipped away to pack up her things, humming a snatch of an opera gayly for the first time in weeks.

"I should think she would be," said Georgia. "If Claude Warner does not appear this way soon, I shall advertise for him as a lost lover, who has a red head and a very sweet sweetheart, a-pining for love o' him."

"Go along, you saucy girl! Don't you tease Jessie. She has enough to bear, and she is keyed up to a high pitch emotionally, and it is to keep her from breaking down

that we are going away. You must help me divert her mind, and amuse her until he does come."

"Dear me, aunt, it does seem as if being in love was but the beginning of one's troubles. I am glad I never was bewitched with the fictitious charms of any man, and sincerely hope I may escape all the perils incident to our outing, if I am to be exposed to the fascinations of our 'Continentals.'"

"You need not be afraid; but I dare say your time will come. When it does, Jessie's mild wooing will be child's play to your stormy scenes and misunderstandings, and perplexities, or I do not know you."

"Of course you do not. Home folks never *do* fully appreciate their jewels. It is too much like being a prophet in one's own country."

"Go away, chatterbox, and help Jessie; and, if you can, keep from talking nonsense all the time, — but I confess I like it. It is like the gentle summer breeze that

keeps us from stifling, — light, airy, and playful."

Aunt Frank went her ways, and that night found them sailing by fairy moonlight down the Potomac. They reached the Fort a little after midnight, and the rows of flaring oil lamps, lining the long pier at which they landed, made quite a pretty scene. The band was playing the last strains of a Strauss waltz, as they went up the steps of the long veranda of the hotel that looked out over the beach.

Their rooms were large enough to be comfortable, and the light wood furnishings, with mattings and muslin curtains, made them look very inviting to these pilgrims, who soon retired, tired enough to drop into an early slumber that lasted unbroken until the morning sun peeped saucily into the open window, as it seemed to rise just over the broad river — at this point some twelve miles wide.

Dressed in clean, starched percales, they went to breakfast, and ate crabs and fish

with a relish unknown away from the smell of salt water. After that, they took a walk on the beach, where the cactus made the landscape assume a Southern aspect, as it struggled for supremacy over the sands of the Chesapeake. They counted the passing sails of the schooners that seemed to float in the offing like white swans, or they gathered shells, encrinites or petrifactions of sea worms, thus lazily living until the hour of bathing arrived.

Arrayed in bathing suits devoid of grace or beauty, even the girls had to shout at each other derisively, while once in a while a figure would appear on the beach, scudding from the bath-house to the water, comical enough to decorate an old-time almanac. Once in the water there was not much to choose. Pretty heads and ugly heads, old heads with young heads, bobbed about like corks, so far as appearances went; but Jessie and Georgia were very care-free and happy, while Aunt Frank enjoyed it all in her ladylike, quiet way,

that was a model of middle-aged perfection of manner, or so thought her two young ladies. "If all the motherless girls had such an aunt, mothers would not be missed so much," they said to each other.

She seldom bathed, but she loved to sit under the shade of her umbrella and watch the water-witches and mermaids frolic. She had not been out there long before a little old lady, with yellow hair just turning gray, and very black eyes, and a still beautiful complexion, would come and sit beside her.

This little old woman had seen a great deal of life. She was a great observer, a good talker, and all she needed to make her pour forth her reminiscences at great length was a good listener. This she found in Aunty Frank, whose quiet ladyhood pleased her, and she gave her a great deal of her time; and one day, she, thus sitting on the sands, kept talking after the bathers had come out of the water, talking until the gong sounded for dinner; and still she

had more to tell, but the substance of it was about like this: —

"Yes, madam, I have a history as full of incident and romance as any novel, but I am not going to give all the particulars now. I am the daughter of a famous general, the wife of another famous general, and have had to prove that I was legitimately born, and legally married; that I am who I am; that I was heir to the property I claim. Why, I have been pushing my claims for over thirty years! I have had hope after hope deferred, but I know they are just, and that I ought to be worth millions, instead of sitting here living on borrowed money to be paid when my claims pass! I have had to sell my diamonds; I have spent all my money on lawyers; I have lost everything but my *courage*. I shall never lose that while I have life, for I *know* that my claim is just; that if I do not get it, my heirs will! Why, half the best part of New Orleans belongs to me! If I should 'compromise' my

case with the present occupants of the property, I should still have enough left to make me thrice a millionnaire. — Give it up? — Never! It is my life — this claim! It excites me like champagne. Ridiculous as it sounds, I really do not know what I should do for excitement and occupation if I should get it. — Thirty odd years is a good while to peg away on one idea, but it is no worse than it would be if I had a case in English Chancery. Do you know, I've seen scores of men get discouraged and die, or give up pushing a claim — just claims, too; and some even becoming insane with anxiety. — They can't stand what a woman can; what I have. Why, already the second or even the third generation are prosecuting the French Spoliation Claims. I wish for my children's sake that mine was concluded. I mean my husband's children. I've nobody else to leave it to. — Do you know, last winter, I couldn't afford to have a room with fire in it, where I board. I wore my bonnet all the time to

keep my head warm. — I presume I will get a settlement just as I am about to die, and cannot enjoy it."

They got up to go in. Aunty Frank had not interrupted the story of a claim, save to say yes, or nod attentively; all the while she thought of how Willis Peyton's bright, talented young life was being wrecked by that infatuation, a Government claim; thought of how this beautiful and brilliant woman had spent a lifetime in pursuit of a legitimate claim, that, if it was ever carried, would only be when she was ready to totter into her grave; and Aunty Frank was very sad at heart.

CHAPTER XVIII.

A SURPRISE.

ONE week on the beach was so pleasant that Aunt Frank informed the proprietor of the hotel that they would take their room for the month.

They then gave themselves up to the quiet amusements, the easy ways into which even "smart" people instinctively glide at these watering places. Every morning they went to the beach, or strolled into the tangle of growth that encroached upon it, where woodbine, orchids, gentians, asters, and golden-rod grew up rank and tall; while creeping cactus sprawled at their roots, and struggled to kill out the grass: the very border-land of North and South, on old Virginia's shore, where more than one kind of battle has been fought beside that of vegetable life.

Being quite hot, as early September days are apt to be, on this particular morning, the ladies, our three and several others, sought these sylvan shades; and being in sight of the water, they selected a clear, greeny spot, and sat down, resolved to make a picnic day of it. Some of the young girls volunteered to go back to the hotel and have a basket of lunch sent down just before the arrival, at noon, of the excursion boat from Washington. Jessie was one among the number.

Georgia declared she would "eat raw clams," and "catch them herself," before she would go for lunch through the hot sun; and one young man who happened to be straying that way, one of the boarders, said that he had a yacht in the bay round the point, and he would like to pick up a crew of lady sailors to go out on the water to enjoy the breeze. All the while he looked so pointedly at Georgia that she said, "Young man, what do you pay a day for lady sailors, with their aunts in tow?"

He laughingly replied, "The highest price for the young sailors, but the captain of my craft always considers himself highly honored if the chaperon will tread the decks for nothing but the fun of it."

"What a sophistical reply! You do not suppose I would leave this picnic for 'fun,' do you?" said Aunt Frank. "I will trust you, Harry Spalding, if you do not sail out of sight, with Georgia and Mrs. Gaines. She loves sailing. I don't."

"Done!" said Harry, and he went away after his boat, which soon came flying with wings spread, like a great water-fowl, from around a sheltering curve in the bay, where she had been lying to.

Harry Spalding was a Government clerk, taking his month's leave; and he was a good-looking, bright young fellow, whom all the girls liked, he was so obliging and ready for anything, from sailing to dancing. With a lot of other young men, clerks also, he kept house, bachelor fashion, in a tent, a half mile farther up the river.

As he came in sight two or three of his companions could be seen aboard, and Georgia was soon re-enforced by Mrs. Gaines, the famous little claimant, and two or three girls who volunteered to go. So it was a merry party that sailed away on the little boat, cruising about; the crew fishing and lunching in the bright sunshine, kept cool by the softly blowing southern breeze. They stayed out until about four in the afternoon.

In the mean time, the improvised picnic was moving on. A waiter brought down a well-filled hamper, and all the girls strolled back by one o'clock, the most of them preferring to stay on the hotel piazza, or on the beach, waiting for the excursion boat from Washington to come in, the one great excitement of certain days; for then the "regulars," as the boarders were styled, often met acquaintances and friends from the city, heard the news from home, and received much additional stimulus to the monotony of their lives.

Jessie had taken her daily dip with the rest, and was walking out on the shore, looking and feeling fresh as a daisy just plucked from the stem, when the *Lady of the Lake* landed, and poured forth a crowd of hundreds who hurried and scurried past each other along the narrow foot plank.

Jessie and a companion were lazily watching some little black boys scoop up the wiggling crabs, when she looked up to meet a presence most unexpected — Claude Warner, browner, fuller of form, manlier, and handsomer than ever.

"Jessie!" "Claude!" Jessie's companion, seeing a stranger greet her with such shining eyes, such a warm grasp of both hands, skipped away and was never missed.

It did not take Claude long to tell how he hurried home as soon as he received his father's despatch, how he had had an exciting interview with his mother, and a reconciliation with the assurance from both parents that nothing would please them better than to have Jessie for a daughter.

Walking together under one umbrella, they strolled into the camp of the picnickers, where all the women at once declared, in an aside, that Jessie "had met her fate." Even Aunty Frank did not think it worth while to intrude her chaperonage, when Jessie and Claude strolled away after lunch, and sat down on the sands under one sunshade, which effectually shut out the gaze of a curious world.

In the mean while he made explanations, protestations, and vows of eternal love and constancy, to his proud little *fiancée*, who made him describe minutely the scene between himself and his parents, that she might discover a vestige of assumption of superiority on their part, for if she had — even then she would have held back. With her it was equality or nothing.

Aunt Frank carried her diplomacy so far that when Claude approached her in the evening, asking if she would object to his taking a room for the remainder of the month at the Fort, she said, "No," if he

would "get it somewhere else beside this hotel," for she thought a little respite after the long misunderstanding and pain of parting would do no harm, and she could keep around at a respectable distance. So it was all arranged before Georgia came back from her sail.

Nobody can tell just how such things are done, — but Georgia came back in a different mood from what she went out. She never meant to do it; but somehow she had let that saucy young captain make love to her in the way that love begins; in looks and tones that nobody sees but those interested.

Mrs. Gaines boasted that there had been no "flirting on that yacht from the time she started until she came in." And yet more than one couple on her had received a wound from Cupid's bow! How could it be otherwise, with three or four young couples, happy, care-free; wind, water, and sky all conspiring to make the world enchanting and beautiful, — a glamour of life's rosy glow over it all?

Poor little Mrs. Gaines, she was not very "cute" outside of points of law affecting her claims! There she was sharp enough, as many good lawyers well knew to their cost.

CHAPTER XIX.

DEEP WATERS.

THE world was getting to look all awry to Willis. Eight long months must turn their wheels of thirty or more spokes around, before his claim could possibly be moved one inch. Even then nothing could be done but have a new bill introduced some "bill day" in Congress, and referred to the Committee on War Claims, there to drag its weary length along again.

These Government claims, of which this sample is only a small one, have all the effect of gambling upon the feverish and fluctuating mind of the claimant. One day all seems to be going well, and hope is in the ascendant; by next month, or the month after, at farthest, the claim will have been allowed, paid, and the happy man enabled to pay

off all old debts, and do all the wonderful things which ready money enables one to do in the way of business, travel, or pleasure.

To-morrow dawns, and his dreams have come to nothing; there is a "hitch" in the evidence or the committee, while Despair comes in and sits beside the hopeless claimant.

Willis became so affected by his anxieties, that he could not apply himself to business, which was observed by his senior partner, Mr. Bridges, who advised him to take his wife and run away to Asbury Park or Long Branch — anywhere — where life flowed on in lively, healthy currents to take up his attention.

He took the advice, bundled up Kate and the baby, and went to Asbury Park. The first few days beside the sea acted like a charm. He revelled in the blue skies, the lovely water, boating, and still life; but a three days' storm came up. It was cold, dismal, chilly without; and although he

stayed with Kate, and romped with his growing heir, no influence — not even love's — was powerful enough to ward off the mood that was clutching at his mind.

Kate was a quiet, observant woman; her natural bent had been deepened by painful experiences, and she could not but notice, with alarm, Willis's state.

He was not only moody, but irritable; almost savage when she tried to arouse or soothe him. His sleep was broken, and he gritted his teeth in horrible dreams when he did lose himself. He grew thin and pale, while people began to observe and comment on his altered and unhappy appearance.

On most subjects he was rational enough, but Kate realized that on this *one*, his mind was fast becoming a wreck. What should she do? She finally persuaded him that they would all be better off, more comfortable at home in Washington, however hot it might be. Besides, she wanted to be near friends and the family physician.

They had only been back a few days, when one morning Kate missed Willis. He had not been out since his return, but sunk into a state of hopeless dejection. The family doctor had told her he feared "softening of the brain," and that he should, in the course of a few days, call in counsel, unless some change for the better occurred.

Aunty Frank and the girls had to be told of his condition at last. It struck them as peculiarly horrible. It is so difficult for the young to realize that it is almost as easy for a mind to fall ill as for the body; and they look upon any form of insanity as exceptional, while in reality, some form of insanity is almost as common as sick headache or neuralgia.

They were still all under one roof when one morning Kate suddenly missed Will from the room. She had come to have a feeling that she must know where he was, what doing, every moment of the time, without seeming to be watching him.

She rose without saying anything, and

went up to their private room. She tried the door — it was locked. Becoming alarmed, she cried out, "Will! Willis! Please let me in! It's I, — Kate. I want something!"

No reply, but she could hear a groan. Really frantic now, she ran down to the sitting-room. "O aunt, I fear the worst! He will not let me in, and he is groaning. Georgia, dear, run for the doctor quick, and the rest of you come up with me."

Now, as Georgia ran out, a policeman, skilled in face-lore, saw her speeding away, so he made it his business to walk in at the open door unannounced, just as the three frightened women were going up-stairs again. Thank God, he was a man whom any woman could rely upon for succor or help! He was a good man, too, if fate had destined him to a lowly calling, with a small salary attached. A few words made him master of the situation, and he was just about as sure of what had taken place

in that room before he opened the door as afterward.

He imperatively motioned Kate and Jessie back, with a gesture that commanded obedience, and to Aunty Frank he said, "Come on, but for God's sake do not scream when I break open the door, for it is doubtless a case of suicide."

By this time he had forced the door, and not a sound was heard. They advanced. Will sat in a large chair, his back to the door — quite dead — with a small pistol in his right hand, firmly clenched, while his head fell over on his left shoulder, — a stream of blood trickling from his temple.

Aunty Frank was a woman susceptible of great self-restraint. No cry escaped her lips; but it was horrible. The first sight of one near and dear who has taken his own life! She merely said, "Shut the door." They stanched his wound, laid him down on a lounge, and so far as possible effaced all traces of personal violence;

and by this time Georgia and the family physician had arrived.

He, too, having had experience, said to Georgia, "Stay here until I come out," which he presently did, and with Aunty Frank went directly to Kate. Taking her by the hand, he said, "My dear child, it is as I feared. He has become hopelessly insane. You must prepare your mind for the worst. Even death would be better than that, — long years of vacuity of mind; another victim to the pursuit of one idea; in his case, that of a claim."

"O doctor, how can I bear it? — to have my husband hopelessly insane! If he had died, I should have grieved; but now no home life, no husband — how can I — how can I bear it?"

"My child, even in affliction, God is merciful. He has taken his own life, something I believe utterly impossible when one is sane."

It was a terrible shock. No words, however consoling, could for the time comfort

that afflicted family. It was one of those melancholy events which many households have to go through with when crime, disaster, or misfortune overtakes them; scenes too painful to be depicted on the pages of a fiction, however nearly allied to facts. Therefore, we draw a curtain around this circumstance which had its place here, or it would never have been on the stage; for it is not our pleasure to depict life's trials in all their realism, only as they illustrate the story we have to tell.

After weary days the poor wife and sisters had to think of the living more than of the dead, for life's demands are inexorable.

Lawyer Bridges took upon himself the settlement of Willis's estate, and the further prosecution of the unhappy claim, which he now foresaw must come to a happy issue sometime soon; the disloyal element having been removed by death, the Government would come to terms.

In the mean time, Kate continued to

keep house for her old father, whose half-pay quite sufficed for the little household. Willis's child was such a comfort, and for its sake she revived and survived her grief.

CHAPTER XX.

WEDDING BELLS.

IN real life events do not come to a standstill with the climaxes that overtake one, however much they may in the artistic closing up of a fictitious story.

> "Into each life some rain must fall,
> Some days must be dark and dreary."

But the sun never ceases to go on shining, far above the clouds, for all that. After death come births; and happy home life still goes on, though chastened and sanctified through sorrow and bereavement.

Coming so soon after Willis's death as it did — at Christmastide — the wedding of Claude and Jessie was very quiet, though none the less elegant or happy.

Mrs. Warner, having no daughter of her

own, took Jessie into her innermost heart; while papa Warner adored and petted her so, that Claude said it was well his venerated father was "not another fellow!"

In the mean time, those two interesting young ladies, Georgia Peyton and Laura Bridges, each had lost a heart, and found one in return.

But Georgia was always a mettlesome girl, and vowed she would "never marry a Government clerk!" Therefore, the owner of that yacht had to take up a profession and prepare himself to win her respectful consideration. He chose Medicine, which necessarily puts off the consummation of their hopes for some years.

Laura Bridges was a beautiful and most charming young woman of society, not without ambition, as has been shown; and she had many admirers among gentlemen of superior abilities and position, one of whom carried her off; and she now exercises her "gifts" as the wife of a foreign

consul, which event left her father very much at the mercy of his friends. He spent much of his leisure with Mrs. Peyton's father, Colonel Kerdolph, whose feebleness seemed to require unusual attentions from old acquaintances.

Finally, the dear old soldier laid down his arms for the last time, and lawyer Bridges was very kind and considerate through all Kate's troubles, saving her every disagreeable detail; so that she came, unconsciously, to lean upon him as her most trusted friend and adviser, while he discovered that he still, now that his beloved daughter had deserted him, could admire and enjoy the companionship of a young and attractive woman.

Thus it all came about so naturally, that it only took time and persuasion to transform the widow Peyton into the happy wife — Mrs. Bridges.

By this time the unhappy "Peyton Claim" had reached a settlement; and Jessie and Georgia were partners in the

estate, from which, those two grateful young women settled an "allowance" upon their beloved Aunty Frank; but they never forgot, or ceased to speak with affection and pity of poor Willis, the unhappy heir of *Colonel Peyton's Claim*.

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